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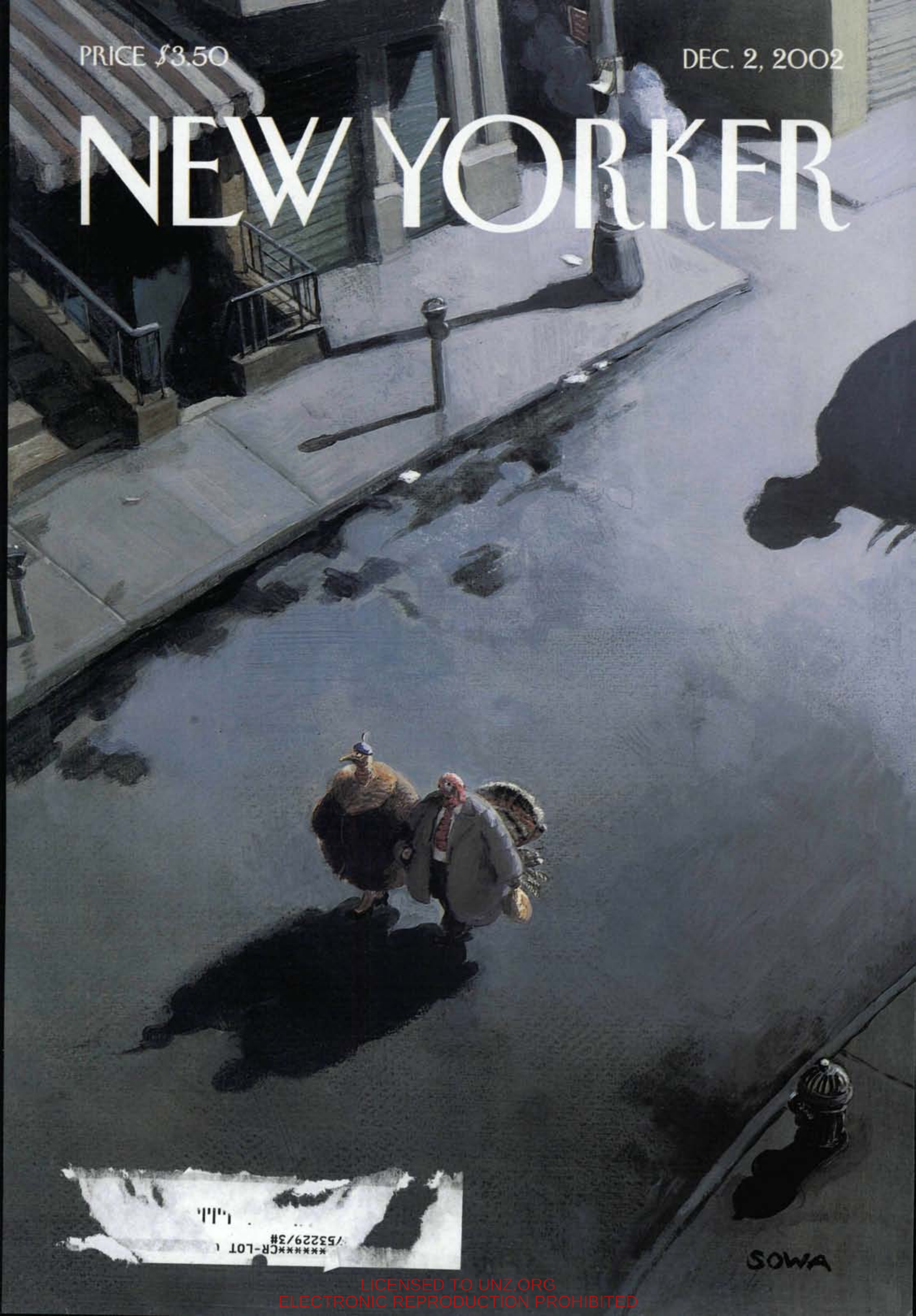

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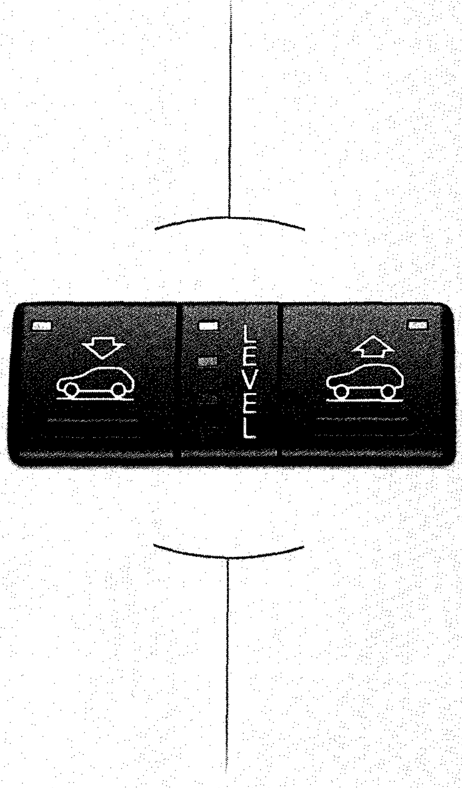

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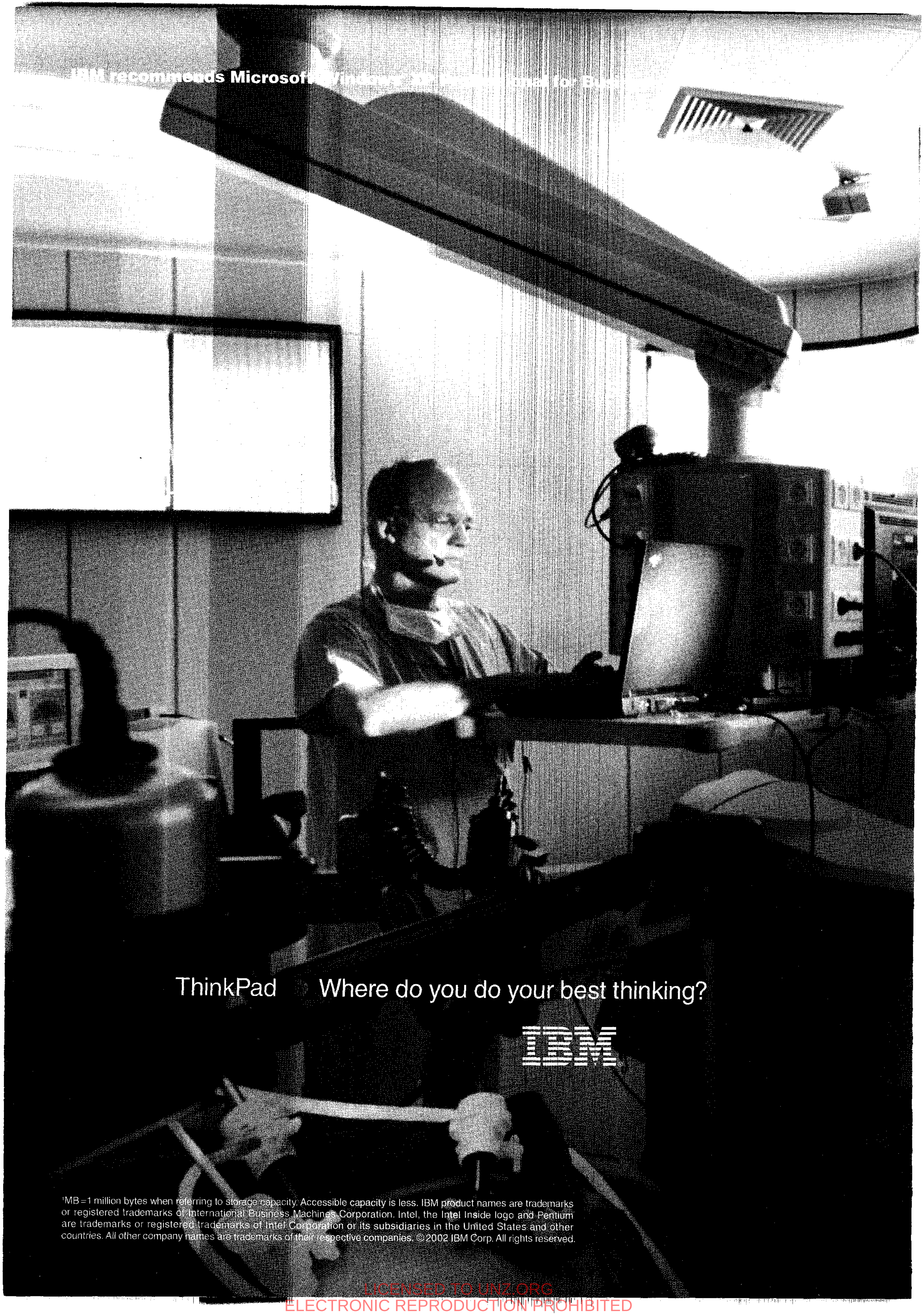
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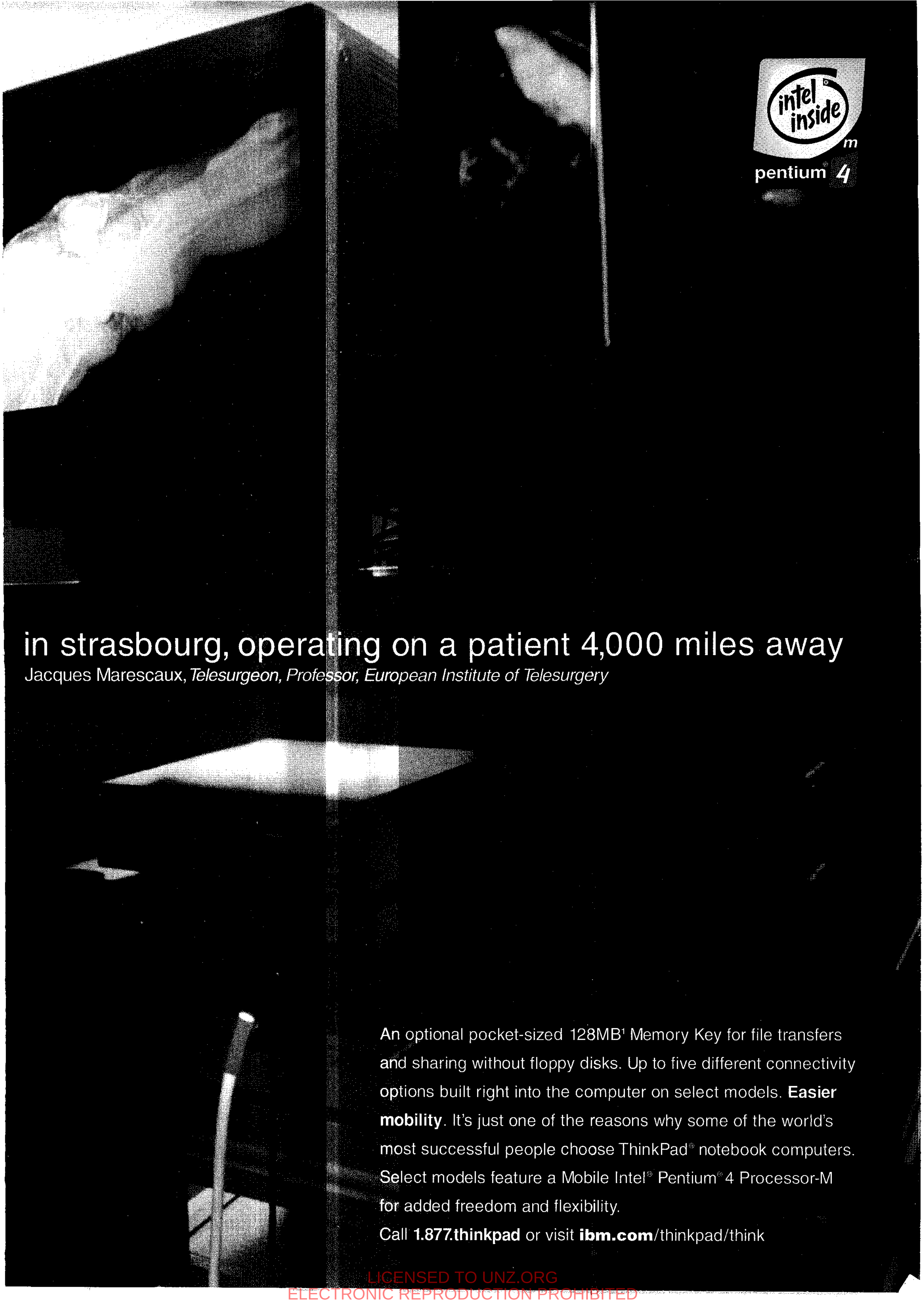intel inside m
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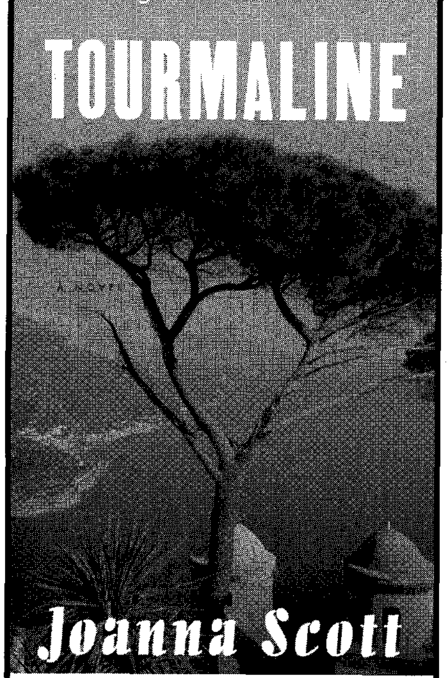

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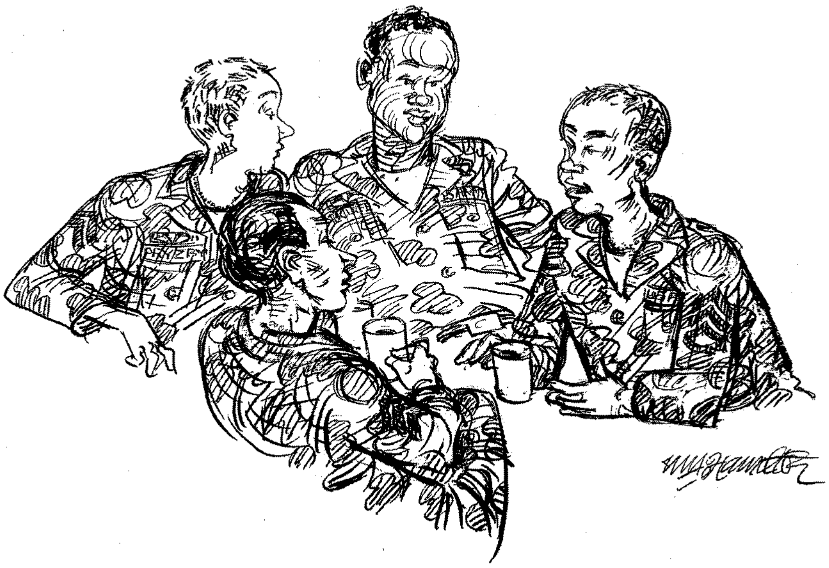

"I just hope it doesn't turn out that we're going after Saddam to get some rich bastard's son into some school."

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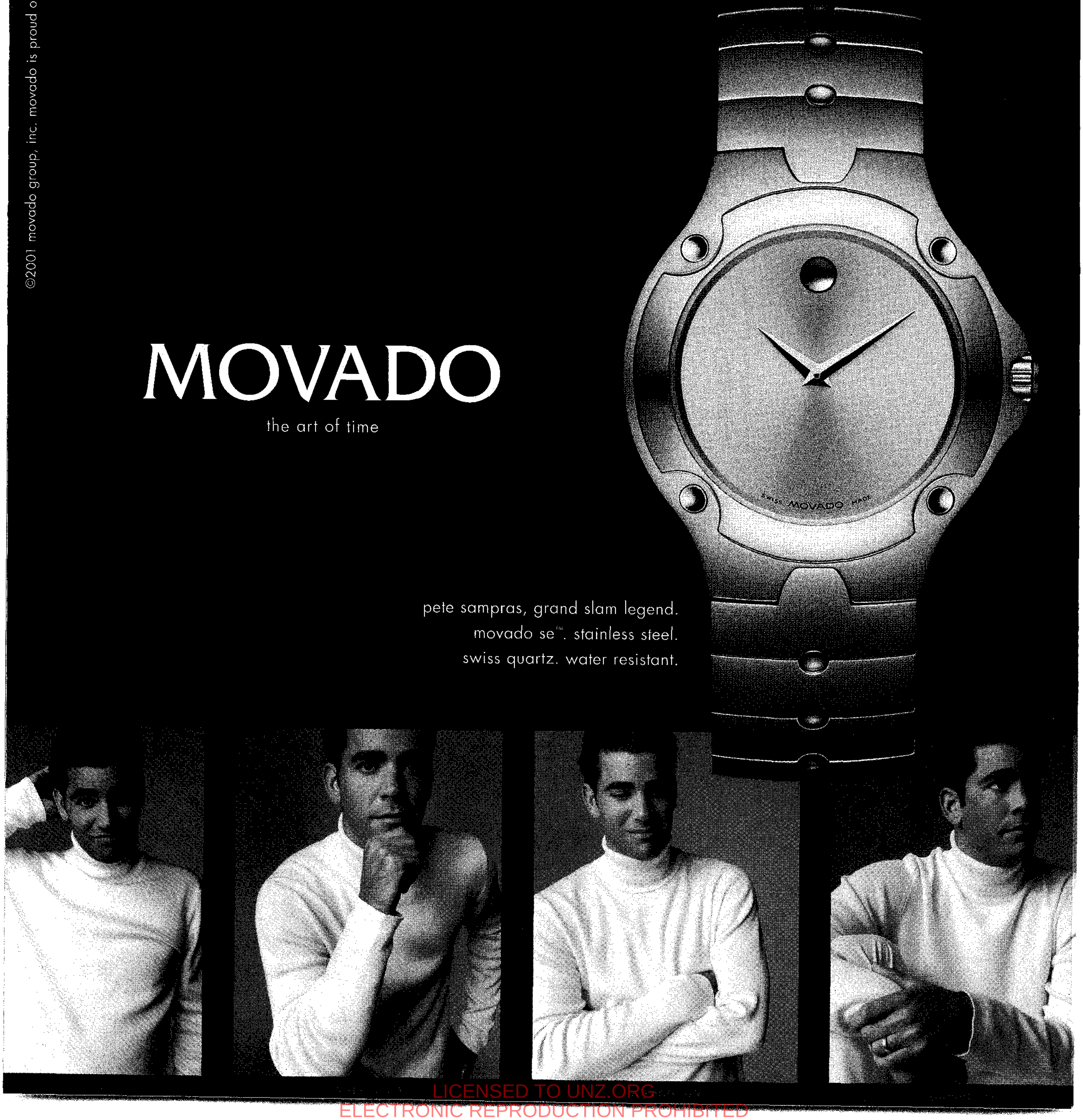

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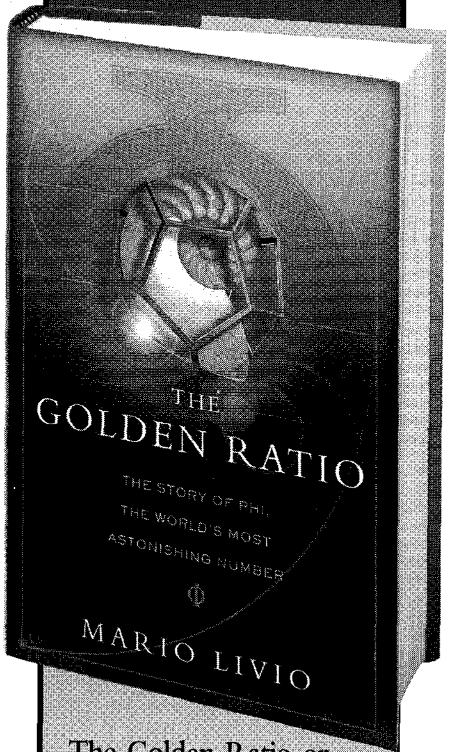
COMMON?



The Golden Ratio or phi (Φ) appears in an uncanny variety of man-made and natural wonders, from Béla Bartók's compositions to a nautilus shell. This lucid and lively account of Φ ranges across disciplines and centuries, offering a thorough understanding of its occurrences and debunking fictional phi-nomena, such as its use in constructing the Pyramids.

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GERMANY IN RUINS

I was a child in Coventry, England, during the indiscriminate destruction of that city night after night by German bombing. I saw my grandmother's hair turn completely white after just one weekend. My relations in London were terrorized, not only by bombs but also by the dreaded silence of the V-1 rockets as their motors cut out just before they fell. So I was shocked and offended by W. G. Sebald's "A Natural History of Destruction," with its implicit suggestion that the Allied bombing of Germany's cities was distinguished by ruthless aggression (November 4th). It was only toward the end that Sebald fully brought home the point that the Germans were themselves responsible for this suffering. Put a photograph of Coventry beside the one of Hamburg that illustrated his article and you will see little difference.
Michael Buckland
Nashville, Tenn.

Sebald notes that, in the years after the bombing of German cities, "the darkest aspects of the final act of destruction . . . remained under a kind of taboo." Sebald's observations are intriguing. But his language in describing the raids—"wholesale annihilation"; "torn from their civil existence and their history"—both is evocative of Nazi rhetoric and suggests a moral equivalence that most Germans, to their credit, are unwilling to endorse. Hamburg, Dresden, and Berlin will be forever trumped by Auschwitz, Sobibor, and Buchenwald, a fact that may explain why Germans have continued to show penitence in public for the horrors that they visited on others but have chosen to regret in more secluded ways the suffering that others brought to them.
Herb Meritt
New Providence, N.J.

The bombing of German cities was certainly barbaric, but was it also, as Sebald suggests, ineffective? Not according to Alfred Jodl, then the Wehrmacht's Chief of Operations. Interviewed before his Nuremberg trial, General Jodl said that the bombings' demoralizing effect was "very great; of first importance," though, interestingly, their impact on civilian morale preoccupied him less than their impact on frontline German soldiers: "While previously the soldier believed that by fighting at the front he was protecting his native land, his wife, and his children, this factor was completely eliminated and replaced by the realization 'I may hold on as much as I please, but still my wife and children go to the dogs.' " Asked if this weakened their fighting ability, Jodl said, "Absolutely."
Moses O'Brien
Brooklyn, N.Y.

On February 25, 1945, I was part of a bombing mission near Munich. Our aircraft was hit and badly damaged and we crash-landed just outside Sonthofen—the "insignificant little market town" where Sebald, then a baby, grew up, and whose bombing, on February 22nd, he describes. We were captured by a group of youths from the training college in the mountains nearby. They took our officers aside and prepared to execute them, only to be stopped by a German officer. We were marched down Sonthofen's main street, and on the way were severely beaten by the townspeople. In July, 2000, I returned to Sonthofen for the first time. The mayor, Hubert Buhl, introduced me to four men who were present the day we were captured: one was the German officer who had prevented the executions. Another apologized for our beating; it was due, he said, partly to anger at the British bombing raid three days earlier, and also to the agitation of a local man who was a devoted Nazi. The trip showed me a different Sonthofen from the one I had known in 1945. It was a time of remembrance, and of reconciliation.
George Rubin
Medford, N.J.

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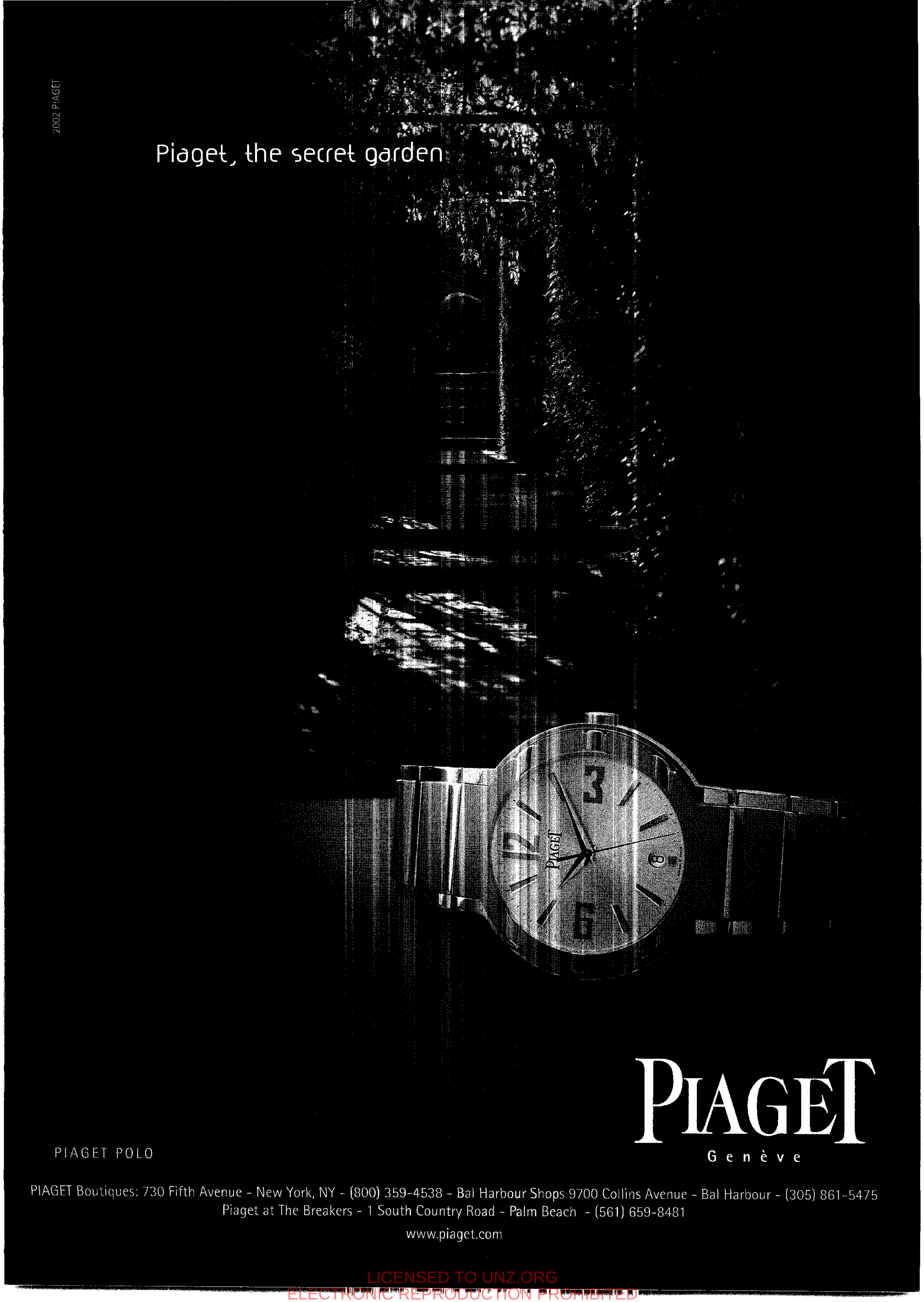

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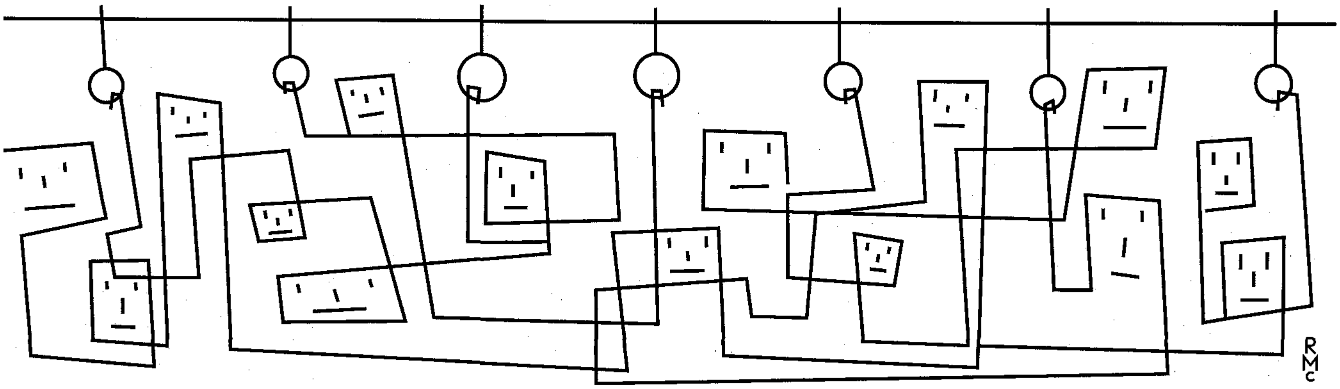

THE HOLIDAYS

"THE RADIO CITY CHRISTMAS SPECTACULAR"
The Rockettes perform their annual high-kicking holiday romp with Santa, his reindeer, and assorted elves. (Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. Through Jan. 5.)

"A CHRISTMAS CAROL"
F. Murray Abraham meets the ghost of Christmas past in this year's musical production of the Dickens tale. (Theatre at Madison Square Garden. 307-4111. Through Dec. 29.) ♦ Gregg Whiteside, of the classical-music station WQXR, reads from Dickens's original manuscript at the Morgan Library, where it is on display through Jan. 12. (29 E. 36th St. 685-0008. Dec. 1 at 2.)

"CHRISTMAS WITH THE CRAWFORDS"
Joey Arias is Joan Crawford, and Jason Scott is little Christina, in the Artfull Circle Theatre's third annual sendup of a very dysfunctional family holiday in Brentwood, California, circa 1944. (Producers Club II, 616 Ninth Ave. 206-1515. Through Dec. 28.)

"THE CHRISTMAS REVELS"
Symphony Space presents a solstice festival celebrating the Irish immigrant experience, with performances by eighty singers, dancers, musicians, and storytellers, including O'Rourke's Revelers, the Wren Children, Irish Step Dancers, and Morris dancers. (Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Dec. 13 at 8, Dec. 14 at 2 and 8, and Dec. 15 at 2 and 6.)

"THE HARD NUT"
The Mark Morris Dance Group brings its kitschy seventies take on "The Nutcracker" to the Brooklyn Philharmonic, conducted by Robert Cole. (BAM's Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. Dec. 17 at 7, Dec. 18-20 at 7:30, Dec. 21 at 2 and 7:30, and Dec. 22 at 3.)

NUTCRACKERS
The New York City Ballet offers eight performances a week of Balanchine's epic, through the New Year (for more information, see Dance). ♦ "The Yorkville Nutcracker," a local version choreographed by Francis Patrelle and set in 1895 at Gracie Mansion, Central Park, and other city locations, plays at Hunter College's Kaye Playhouse. (Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. Dec. 13 at 7, Dec. 14 at 2 and 7, and Dec. 15 at 1 and 6.) The New York Theatre Ballet's short, child-friendly performances of "The Nutcracker" play on weekends through the month of December. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 307-4100. Dec. 7-8, Dec. 14-15, and Dec. 21-22 at 11 A.M., 1, and 3:30. Through Dec. 22.)

TREES
Having dispensed with his duties at Alice's Restaurant a week earlier, the singer Arlo Guthrie and members of the Big Apple Circus turn out for the lighting of Lincoln Center's forty-foot blue spruce on Dec. 2 at 5:30. (Broadway at 63rd St. For more information, call 875-5108.) ♦ After leaving the Rizzo family property in Bloomsbury, New Jersey, the seventy-six-foot-tall Norway spruce now in Rockefeller Center needed twenty-five electricians, thirty thousand bulbs, and five miles of wire to get dressed for the season, which kicks off with a star-studded lighting ceremony on Dec. 4 at 7. (Fifth Ave. at 50th St.)

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HANUKKAH
With the help of a Con Edison cherry picker and a blowtorch, the lanterns atop the thirty-two-foot-tall menorah at Fifth Avenue and Fifty-ninth Street will be set aglow, a new one each night, for eight consecutive evenings, beginning Nov. 29 at 3. (For more information, call 736-8400.)

HOLIDAY TUNES
The folksinger Judy Collins offers a program of seasonal songs at Carnegie Hall on Nov. 29 at 8. (247-7800.) ♦ Ellen Kushner, the public-radio host of "Sound & Spirit," narrates the Hanukkah-themed adventure tale "The Golden Dreydl: a Klezmer Nutcracker." The Shirim Klezmer Orchestra provides the music, which is derived from Tchaikovsky's "Nutcracker" Suite. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. Dec. 8 at 1:30.) ♦ The former Bongos front man Richard Barone leads a twenty-piece chorus in the "Downtown Messiah," an abridged version of Handel's holiday classic. The guest soloists include Dar Williams, Jane Siberry, David Johansen, and Syd Straw. (Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. 228-6300. Dec. 13-14 at 7:30 and 10:30.)

MORE HOLIDAY MUSIC

"MESSIAH"
St. Thomas Episcopal Church, with its celebrated choir of men and boys, gives one of the best presentations of Handel's oratorio in the city, with the early-music group Concert Royal and guest soloists. (Fifth Ave. at 53rd St. Dec. 17 and Dec. 19 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 664-9360.) ♦ Another topnotch "Messiah" is performed by Musica Sacra, directed by Richard Westenburg. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Dec. 18 at 8.) ♦ National Chorale's thirty-fifth annual "Messiah Sing-In" lets the audience, up to three thousand strong, be the chorus; bring a score, or buy one at the door. (Avery Fisher Hall. 333-5333. Dec. 18 at 8.) ♦ For the first time in twenty years, the New York Philharmonic, with the Westminster Symphonic Choir, will add its voice to the "Messiah" throng, performing four concerts at Riverside Church with an all-star lineup of soloists, including the soprano Elizabeth Futral and the countertenor David Daniels; Neville Marriner is the conductor. (Riverside Dr. at 120th St. 875-5656. Dec. 18-19 at 7:30 and Dec. 20-21 at 8.)

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Dec. 8: Jonathan Sheffer conducts the Eos Orchestra (with chorus) in a modern adaptation of Schütz's oratorio "The Birth of Jesus Christ," rescored for marimbas and strings. Corelli's "Christmas Concerto" will also be performed, untouched. ♦ Dec. 15: No one does a better choral Christmas than the virtuoso male voices of Chanticleer, who sing a program ranging from medieval sacred works to spirituals and carols. (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 570-3949. Both concerts are presented in the Medieval Sculpture Hall at 6:30 and 8:30. For a complete listing of concerts at the museum and at the Cloisters, see the Met's Web site, www.metmuseum.org.)

AVERY FISHER HALL
Dec. 15 at 3: The Klezmer Conservatory Band offers a "Klezmerfest" of traditional Jewish music. ♦ Dec. 22 at 3: The Principal Brass Quintet of the New York Philharmonic gets together with some friends, the German Brass, for a festive holiday program. (875-5656.)

CATHEDRAL OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE
The Russian Chamber Chorus of New York brings the rich and lustrous sounds of Russian liturgical music (by Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff) to the cathedral, along with a clutch of Russian and Ukrainian carols. (Dec. 7 at 3. For information about tickets, call 581-1212.) ♦ "A Baroque Christmas" with the Ensemble for Early Music, a smorgasbord of French noëls, Lutheran Advent carols, Scottish folk tunes, and more. (280-0330. Dec. 7 at 8, Dec. 15 and Dec. 22 at 3, and Dec. 25 at 3 and 8.) (Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St.)

VIENNA CHOIR BOYS
The legendary ensemble makes its annual visit to Carnegie Hall. (247-7800. Dec. 15 at 7:30.)

NEW YORK STRING ORCHESTRA
Carnegie Hall's proud holiday tradition, a convocation of young virtuosos conducted by Jaime Laredo. Dec. 24 at 7: Music by Grieg, Schubert (the "Unfinished" Symphony), and Mendelssohn (the First Piano Concerto, with Lang Lang). ♦ Dec. 28 at 8: The violinist Leila Josefowicz joins the ensemble for an all-Mendelssohn program, including the Violin Concerto and the incidental music for "A Midsummer Night's Dream" (with narration by the actress Claire Bloom). (247-7800.)

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LA BOHÈME
Baz Luhrmann's long-awaited production of Puccini's opera has arrived. In previews. (Broadway, 1681 Broadway, at 53rd St. 239-6200.)

CROWNS
Based on a book of photographs of black women in church hats, Regina Taylor's play includes gospel singing and features choreography by Ronald K. Brown. With Lillias White, Harriett D. Foy, Lawrence Clayton, and others. In previews. Opens Dec. 3 at 6:30. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422.)

DINNER AT EIGHT
Gerald Gutierrez directs a new production of George S. Kaufman and Edna Ferber's 1932 play about a high-society New York dinner party. In previews. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

GONE HOME
Manhattan Theatre Club presents a new play by John Corwin, directed by David Warren, about a young writer's homecoming. In previews. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

MAN OF LA MANCHA
Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, Brian Stokes Mitchell, and Ernie Sabella star in a revival of the musical, directed by Jonathan Kent. In previews. (Martin Beck, 302 E. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE MERCY SEAT
MCC Theatre presents a new play by Neil LaBute, about life after 9/11, starring Liev Schreiber and Sigourney Weaver. In previews. (Acorn, 410 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

OUR TOWN
Paul Newman returns to Broadway for the first time since 1964, playing the Stage Manager in the Thornton Wilder classic. Directed by James Naughton. In previews. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE TEMPEST
The Pearl Theatre Company continues its season with Shakespeare's fantasy, directed by Padraic Lillis, with Rachel Botchan as Miranda and Robert Hock as Prospero. Previews begin Dec. 3. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)

WHAT DIDN'T HAPPEN
Playwrights Horizons presents a new play by Christopher Shinn, starring Chris Noth, Matt McGrath, Suzanne Cryer, and Robert Hogan. In previews. (The Duke, 229 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

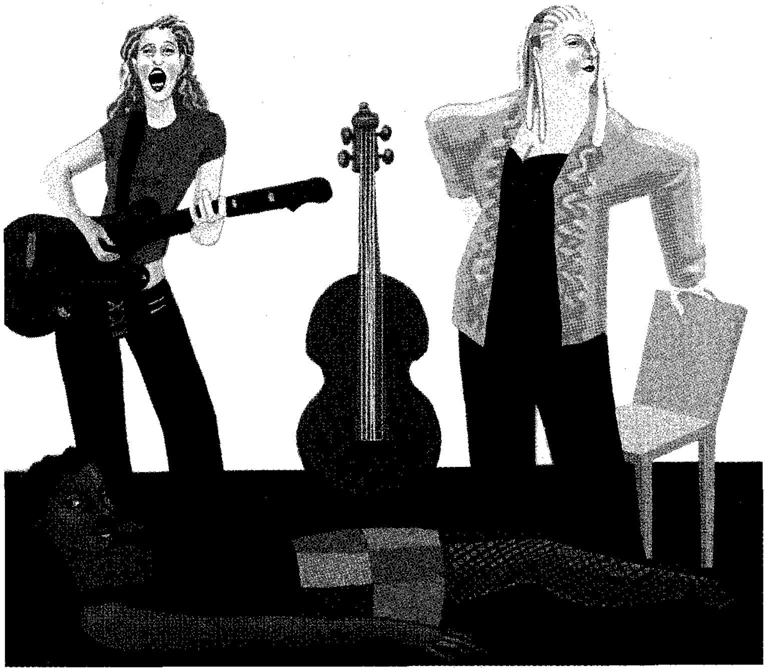
BETTY RULES
A kinetic alterna-rock musical, directed by Michael Greif ("Rent"), chronicling the nearly two-decade-long career of a real-life girl band called Betty and its members' battle to keep the group and their sanity intact on the road, at home, onstage, and even in therapy. (Zipper, 336 W. 37th St. 239-6200.)

BEWILDERNESS
The genial, sleepy-eyed English comedian Bill Bailey has a chatty brand of humor that creeps up on the audience, convulsing them by afterthought. (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

BLUE/ORANGE
The British playwright Joe Penhall brings his play about mental illness and racism to New York, in a production that stars Harold Perrineau, Jr., Zeljko Ivanek, and Glenn Fitzgerald. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 239-6200.)

BOOK OF DAYS
Lanford Wilson's adroit and compelling yarn, well directed by Marshall W. Mason, conjures up a bright and barbarous Middle America—"Our Town" meets "The Fall of the House of Usher." With an appealing performance by Miriam Shor. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/18/02.) (Signature Theatre, 555 W. 42nd St. 244-7529.)

BOSTON MARRIAGE
Kate Burton and Martha Plimpton chew the scenery in David Mamet's genteelly bawdy, mot-a-minute drawing-room comedy about two late-nineteenth-century lesbians, directed by Karen Kohlhaas. Co-starring roles are played by Arden Myrin, as a benighted Scottish maid, and by the frogged, gusseted, betulled, and brocaded dresses worn by the stars. Part "Lady Windermere's Fan" (if the fan were a muff), part "Twelfth Night" (if Viola were to win Olivia), the play features the sort of grande-dame preening and eyebrow-arching repartee that these days is usually performed by men in drag. To echo the Mamet script: "Could such a Byzantine rodomontade succeed?" Yes, with reservations: the play is stilted but not unenjoyable—particularly for wordsmiths. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200.)


Elizabeth and Amy Ziff and Alyson Palmer, in "Betty Rules" at the Zipper.

ALISON SEIFFER

DEBBIE DOES DALLAS
A saucy postmodern musical, adapted from the porn film, and well played by Sherie Rene Scott (as Debbie), Mary Catherine Garrison, Jon Patrick Walker, Paul Fitzgerald, and others. (Jane Street Theatre, 113 Jane St. 239-6200.)

FAR AWAY
In Caryl Churchill's darkly thrilling fable, a not-too-distant totalitarian society is engaged in a war of all against all. Humans, animals, nations, insects, the elements—even gravity—make and break alliances, with bloody consequences. In three acts, centered loosely on family, workplace, and fate, Churchill tightens the noose around her players. The show's vivid, nightmarish centerpiece, a fashion parade of the condemned, knocks the breath out of the audience. The exceptional cast includes Frances McDormand, Marin Ireland, and Chris Messina. The show is not to be missed. Directed by Stephen Daldry. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 239-6200.)

FLOWER DRUM SONG
Part fashion show, part night-club act, part hymn to Asian-American diversity, David Henry Hwang's update of the 1958 Rodgers and Hammerstein show, set in San Francisco's Chinatown, works far better than the original. With snazzy direction and choreography by Robert Longbottom and vivacious dancing by Sandra Allen. (11/4/02) (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

THE FOURTH SISTER
In Janusz Glowacki's audacious new play, a black comedy set in money-grubbing modern Moscow, bandits are businessmen, virgins are for sale, and even the tiger in the Moscow zoo gets ripped off daily. The play feels Brechtian—there's even accordion music—but Glowacki tells his story with less earnestness and more humor than Brecht used. His three sisters (nothing like Chekhov's) live in a cramped apartment (well designed by Rachel Hauck) with their drunken father and a sullen houseboy, Stiopa, played by Jase Blankfort (who looks fifteen and is a talent to watch). Tania (Alicia Goranson) stands out as the funniest of the sisters—a whirlwind of shallowness who is obsessed by celebrity, Versace, and a thug named Kostya. Suzanne Shepherd does a splendid turn as a vodka-pounding babushka in a head scarf and a bulletproof vest. Directed by Lisa Peterson. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 353-0303.)

THE FOURTH WALL
There's applause for the politics and big yuks for the gags in A. R. Gurney's updated version of his 1992 play, stylishly directed by David Saint. While denouncing the decay of the government, the environment, and the theatre, Gurney manages to soundly entertain—with the aid of four brilliant performers (Sandy Duncan, Charles Kimbrough, David Pittu, and Susan Sullivan). Five Cole Porter numbers and some damn clever writing help make the evening debonair, thought provoking, and funny. (Primary Stages, 353 W. 45th St. 333-4052.)

FRANKIE AND JOHNNY IN THE CLAIR DE LUNE
Edie Falco and Stanley Tucci star in Terrence McNally's sentimental two-character study about a man and a woman marginalized by life. Joe Mantello directs. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

THE GENERAL FROM AMERICA
Theatre for a New Audience presents Richard Nelson's play about Benedict Arnold, with Corin Redgrave in the lead role. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

GHOSTS
The reason to see the Classic Stage production of Ibsen's play is not the new Lanford Wilson translation of it, which often clunks ("Just shut up and listen for once!," "Aw, that was the booze talkin' "), it is Amy Irving's luminous rendition of Mrs. Alving, and the surprising evolution of her relationship with her sickly son, played with a fascinating brand of epicene virility by Ted Schneider. (136 E. 13th St. 677-4210, ext. 13.)

HAIRSPRAY
This musical-comedy version of the 1988 John Waters movie takes off from the opening number and never loses its momentum. In Baltimore in 1962, the rotund teen Tracy Turnblad (Marissa Jaret Winokur) wants to dance, make out with the best-looking boy in town, and integrate "The

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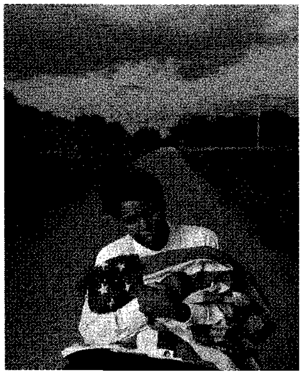

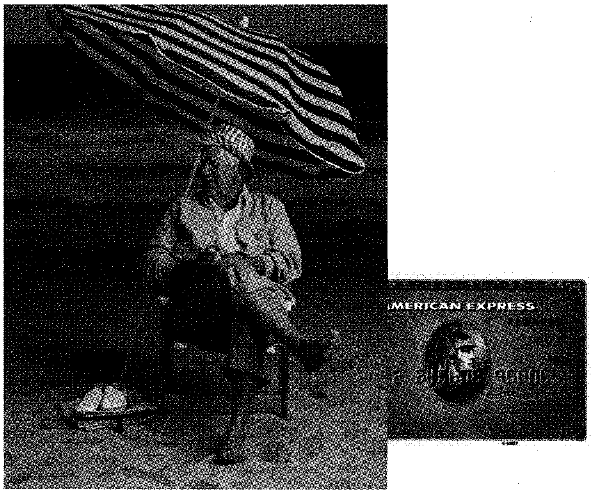

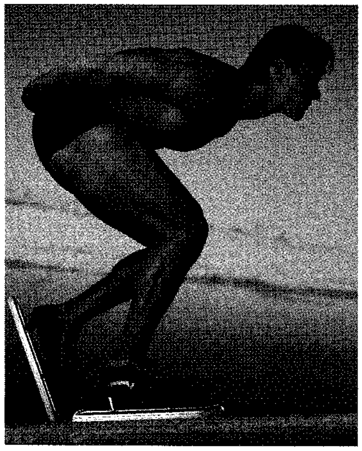

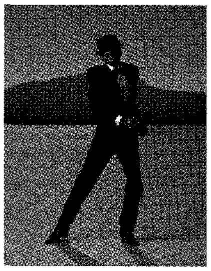

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Corny Collins Show," a local teen-dance TV program. With the great Harvey Fierstein, plucked, shaved, and padded, as Tracy's mother, Edna Turnblad. (9/2/02) (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

HOLLYWOOD ARMS

This rather depressing, somewhat fictionalized memoir by Carol Burnett, written with her late daughter, Carrie Hamilton, takes its name from the residential hotel in Los Angeles where the comedienne was raised by her grandmother (Linda Lavin), while her mother (Michele Pawk) struggled to build a career. Directed by Harold Prince. (11/18/02) (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

IMAGINARY FRIENDS

A new play about the literary feud between Lillian Hellman and Mary McCarthy, starring Swoosie Kurtz and Cherry Jones. Written by Nora Ephron, with music by Marvin Hamlisch and lyrics by Craig Carnelia. (Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

JOLSON & COMPANY

Stephen Mo Hanan and Jay Berkow's musical tribute to the great vaudevillian Al Jolson. (Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

MOVIN' OUT

Twyla Tharp's show about small-town teen-agers coming of age during the Vietnam War era is set to twenty-seven songs by Billy Joel. The band is terrific, and the dancers—above all, John Selya as the hero, Eddie—are positively on fire. (11/4/02) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

PETER AND VANDY

Scenes from a modern relationship are presented out of chronological order, with a cast of two. Perhaps it has been done before, but rarely with the insight and depth of emotion that this production affords. The title pair is performed by Monique Vukovic and Jay DiPietro, who is also the play's writer and director and who has excelled at all three jobs. He and Vukovic achieve great naturalism, showing character through small, perfect gestures. To be part of a couple, the playwright implies, is to engage in a tender, unwinnable power struggle, in which even a peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwich can become a source of dispute. (Paradise, 64 E. 4th St. 206-1515. Closes Dec. 8.)

THE PHOENICIAN WOMEN

In his adaptation of this rarely produced Euripides play about a war between Oedipus' sons, David Travis (who directs) presents a riveting dissection of a family's conflicts over ambition, justice, and blood ties. Travis's language is modern without being hip, and, as a director, he exhibits a rare gift for making the idea of the Greek chorus—as a representation of the community—work onstage. The talented cast includes Sybil Lines, Robert Kya-Hill, Aysan Celik, Keith Davis, Michael Aronov, Curt Hostetter, Chris Thorn, and Will Davis. (Ohio, 66 Wooster St. 206-1515. Closes Nov. 30.)

POOR BEAST IN THE RAIN

As Billy Roche's play opens, in a betting shop in the small Irish town of Wexford, a local boy named Georgie (John Keating) looks reverently at the departing clerk, and exclaims to his betting pal, "She's a terrible nice girl, Joe, ain't she?" Joe (Mickey Kelly) says dismissively, "There's more meat on a butcher's apron!," but you know Eileen (Tracy Coogan) will break Georgie's heart. Roche's main subject is meant to be the return to Wexford of a ne'er-do-well named Danger Doyle, who ran off with Eileen's mother a decade earlier, leaving behind Molly, the "poor beast" of the title. But Keating and Coogan's winning performances and rippling Irish accents make their story take over. Directed by Terence Lamude. (Irish Arts Center, 553 W. 51st St. 206-1515.)

RUSSELL SIMMONS'
DEF POETRY JAM ON BROADWAY

The hip-hop legend has brought together spoken-word stylists from his HBO show and from the national poetry-slam circuit to create an exuberant, defiant production. As the d.j. Tendaji Lathan spins both old- and new-"skool" tunes, the rap bards deliver poems that are part autobiography, part social commentary, addressing everything from love, America, racism, and terrorism to Krispy Kreme donuts. "Jammin'," an unsentimental but sincere tribute to Bob Marley and Jam Master Jay, and

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"County of Kings," a Brooklyn rapper's tough tour of his home streets, are only two of twenty pieces in the show, each strong, each a complete original. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

SALOMÉ
Al Pacino is Herod, Dianne Wiest is Herod's wife, David Strathairn is John the Baptist, and Marisa Tomei is the title character, in a staged reading of the Oscar Wilde play, directed by Estelle Parsons. (St. Ann's Warehouse, 38 Water St., Brooklyn. 866-468-7619.)

SAY GOODNIGHT, GRACIE
Frank Gorshin is George Burns in Rupert Holmes's touching one-man tribute to the unsinkable comic and his more-than-a-sidekick wife, Gracie Allen. It's not just a showcase for one man; it's a showcase for an era. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

SIGNALS OF DISTRESS
A one-act based on Jim Crace's 1995 novel, set in 1830, about a prissy, smug, kindhearted man (Richard Crawford) who visits an isolated village on England's northern coast just as a group of Americans are shipwrecked there. The story—about the price of human relationships—unfolds both literally and metaphorically through a scrim, creating a distance that makes the occasional bursts of pure emotion all the more moving. Directed by Joshua Carlebach. (SoHo Rep, 46 Walker St. 206-1515. Closes Dec. 5.)

TAKE ME OUT
Richard Greenberg's exhilarating production, directed by Joe Mantello, is about a headstrong baseball colossus named Darren Lemming (superbly played by Daniel Sunjata), who announces one day at a press conference that he's gay. (7/22/02) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200.)

TEMPORARY HELP
David Wiltse, a mystery novelist, has turned a 1990 news story about a Missouri farm couple who killed their hired hands into a somewhat toothless play. Robert Cuccioli and Margaret Colin play the husband and wife, Karl and Faye Streber, and Chad Allen plays Vincent, the drifter who attracts the sexual advances of both of them. Wiltse doesn't give his characters enough depth or his plot enough twists to make his story feel much bigger than the headline. (Women's Project Theatre, 424 W. 55th St. 239-6200.)

TUESDAYS WITH MORRIE
Directed by David Esbjornson, who worked manfully—and successfully—to prevent big emotions from coming across as schmalz, this play, based on Mitch Albom's best-selling book, is a love song to a wise old professor who taught an unreflective younger man how to feel. Morrie Schwartz, played with wit and heart by Alvin Epstein, sits in a wheelchair, dying of Lou Gehrig's disease, but it is his former student Mitch (John Tenney) who is crippled, because he fears life more than Morrie fears death. On Mitch's first visit to see his old mentor, Morrie asks him, "Are you trying to be as human as you can be?" The question leads to a deathbed conversion not of the dying but of the living. With autumnal staging by Robert Brill, and an excellent script by Albom and Jeffrey Hatcher. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 307-4100.)

LONG RUNS

AIDA
Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4747.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4747.

BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES
Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370.

CABARET
Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200.

CHICAGO
Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (ABRIDGED)
Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.

DE LA GUARDA
Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200.

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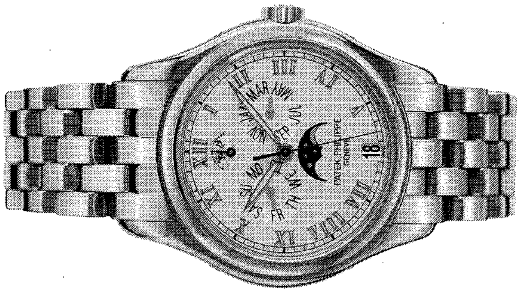

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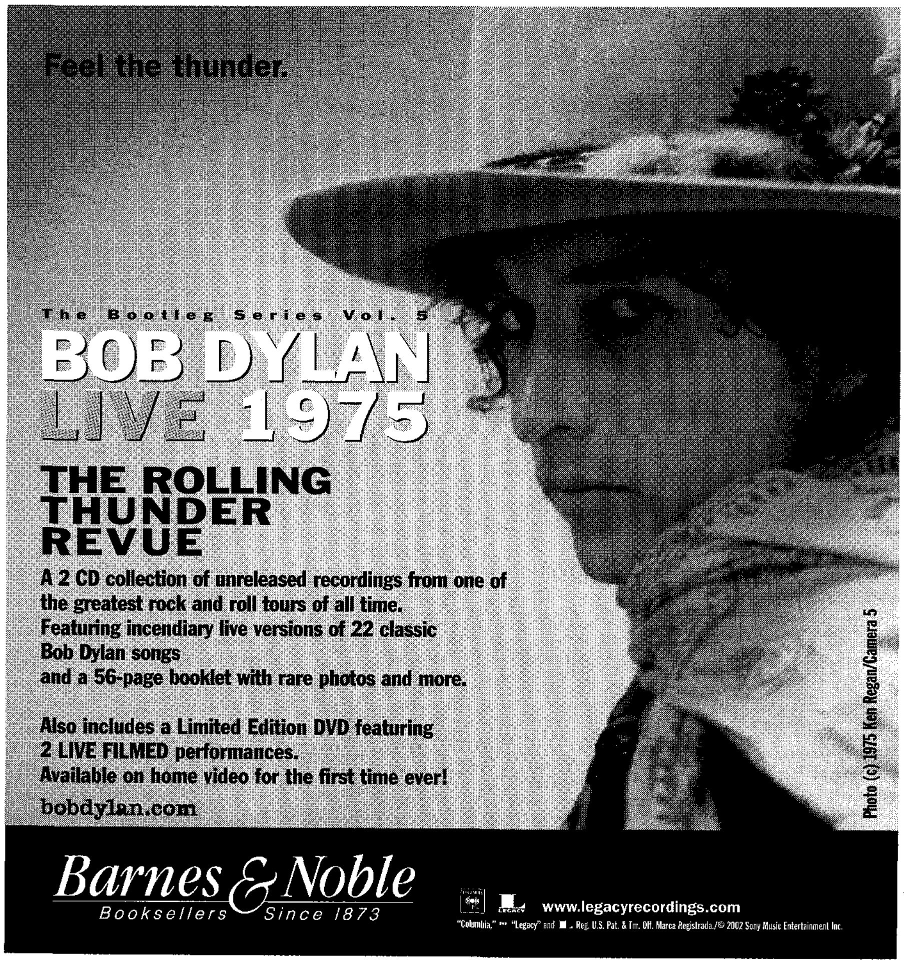

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Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.

42ND STREET
Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.

THE GOAT; OR, WHO IS SYLVIA
Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.

THE GRADUATE
Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.

THE GUYS
The Flea, 41 White St. 206-1515.

I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

INTO THE WOODS
Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.

LOVE, JANIS
Village Theatre, 158 Bleecker St. 307-4100.

MAMMA MIA!
Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 563-5544.

METAMORPHOSES
Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.

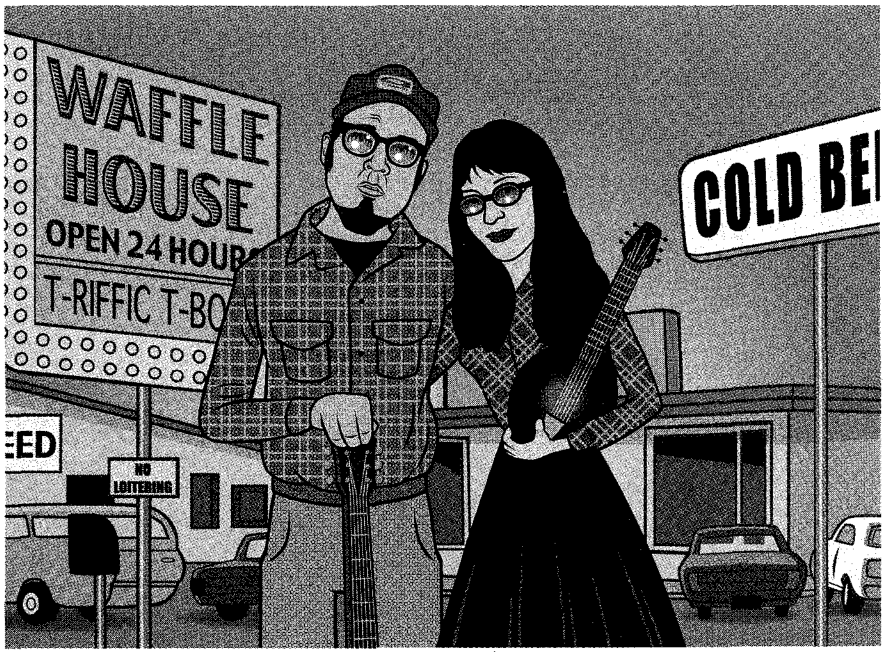
LES MISÉRABLES
Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.

OKLAHOMA!
Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.

PERFECT CRIME
Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401.

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.



Brett and Rennie Sparks, better known as the Handsome Family, at Southpaw.

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PUPPETRY OF THE PENIS
John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.

RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000.

STOMP
Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477.

THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE
Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.

TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING
St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200.

UNDERNEATH THE LINTEL
Soho Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 239-6200.

URINETOWN
Henry Miller, 124 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
The boys and girls at the Christmas party brim with Russian verve and pluck, and the candies, fairies, and flowers are fragrant with the bloom of romance in Balanchine's "Nutcracker." Tchaikovsky wrote the music at the peak of his powers as a fabulist, and Balanchine's ballet rose to meet it. (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 870-5570. Nov. 29 at 8, Nov. 30 at 2 and 8, Dec. 1 at 1 and 5, and Dec. 3 at 6.)

TRISHA BROWN DANCE COMPANY
The highlight of the troupe's season is a staging of the bleak Schubert song cycle "Winterreise," in which a man suffers existential alienation a century before anyone knew what it was. Three dancers surround the dour hero, sung by the baritone Simon Keenlyside, and either interpret his words or enter the drama. In one song, a syncopated swirl of hands becomes the bright leaves on the tree of "last hope" (the song's title); in another, the dancers lift the winter wanderer off his feet to keep him from climbing into the grave. Brown's work is usually sunny in mood, or at least dry, but for this project she thought about Aberdeen, Washington, where she grew up. "It was a melancholy and reflective place," she says. "It rained all the time." "Winterreise" alternates with performances of première and repertory works in Brown's usual, abstract mode. (John Jay College Theatre, 899 Tenth Ave. 721-6500. Dec. 2 at 8 and Dec. 3 at 7. Through Dec. 14.)

"MERCY"
Meredith Monk's enigmatic multimedia composition, which she created with the installation artist Ann Hamilton, features drably clothed figures who move (when they do move) across a mostly empty stage, accompanied by eerie music—Gregorian chants, monastic oms, faint chorales, menacing whispers, dog barks—as images, colors, and lights flicker across a massive screen behind them. Monk sets her actors simple tasks, such as writing, moving furniture, and carrying things, but she leaves the import of their actions mysterious. Sometimes her combinations of light and movement exalt; at other times they perplex. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St. Dec. 3 at 7:30. 718-636-4100.)

"RHYTHM-A-NING"
The eight-person Jazz Tap Ensemble, visiting from Los Angeles, shares in the long tradition of unmannered, densely rhythmic tap that got such a boost from Savion Glover's "Bring in da Noise, Bring in da Funk." In keeping with that tradition, the program is sparing of wall-of-sound group numbers and generous with solos, notably those by the sprightly Charon Aldredge and by Derick K. Grant, a veteran of Glover's show, whose beats are warm and richly patterned. The show also features the artistic director Lynn Dally's recent experiments in tap fusion, for which her hoofers join in with flamenco and Bharata Natyam artists. "Yeah, I'm for world peace," Dally says. "But this is about the dancing." Accompanied by live piano music, with bass and drums. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Nov. 27 at 8, Nov. 29-30 at 2 and 8, and Dec. 1 at 2 and 7:30.)

CATHY WEIS
Weis is a cartoonist of a choreographer, and the prankish play between her dancers and their live-video twins prompts as much joy as a Road Runner cartoon—and disregards as many laws of physics. In her latest piece, "Electric Haiku," she adds sound effects. When a dirty old man opens his trenchcoat, a loud fluttering of wings makes it seem as if invisible birds were rushing out. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Nov. 29-30 at 7 and Dec. 1 at 2.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

THE STROKES
The flagship band of the new rock rebellion re-takes Manhattan. Still touring on the strength of last year's highly touted début album, this quintet's reluctance to release any new material is baiting critics, who are eagerly wagering on the prospect of a sophomore slump. In the interim, however, they remain the coolest kids on the block. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. Nov. 27 and Nov. 29 at 7:30.)

DARK STAR ORCHESTRA
The country's second-best Grateful Dead cover band, after the surviving members, who have regrouped as the Other Ones. (The World, Broadway at 43rd St. 307-7171. Nov. 29-30 at 7.)

THE BARRY HARRIS JAZZ ENSEMBLE
Bebop in its purest form. The estimable pianist and educator Harris gathers his cronies, including the saxophonists Jimmy Heath and Charles Davis and the trombonist Slide Hampton, to reveal the timeless beauty of a style that's too often abused. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Nov. 30 at 8.)

INTERNATIONAL POP OVERTHROW FESTIVAL
In 1998, the Los Angeles-based music journalist David Bash drew up a list of rock-and-roll acts he'd love to see in concert, and the first annual International Pop Overthrow festival was born. Since then the I.P.O. has become a premier showcase of contemporary power pop. Now Bash has taken the I.P.O. on the road, packing such venues as Arlene Grocery, the Knitting Factory, the Luna Lounge, and Southpaw with more than a hundred bands that meet his definition of pop—they're rich with melody, harmony, and lots of guitar. (The festival starts Dec. 3 and runs through Dec. 14. For more information, visit www.internationalpopoverthrow.com.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

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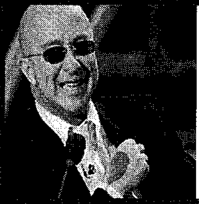

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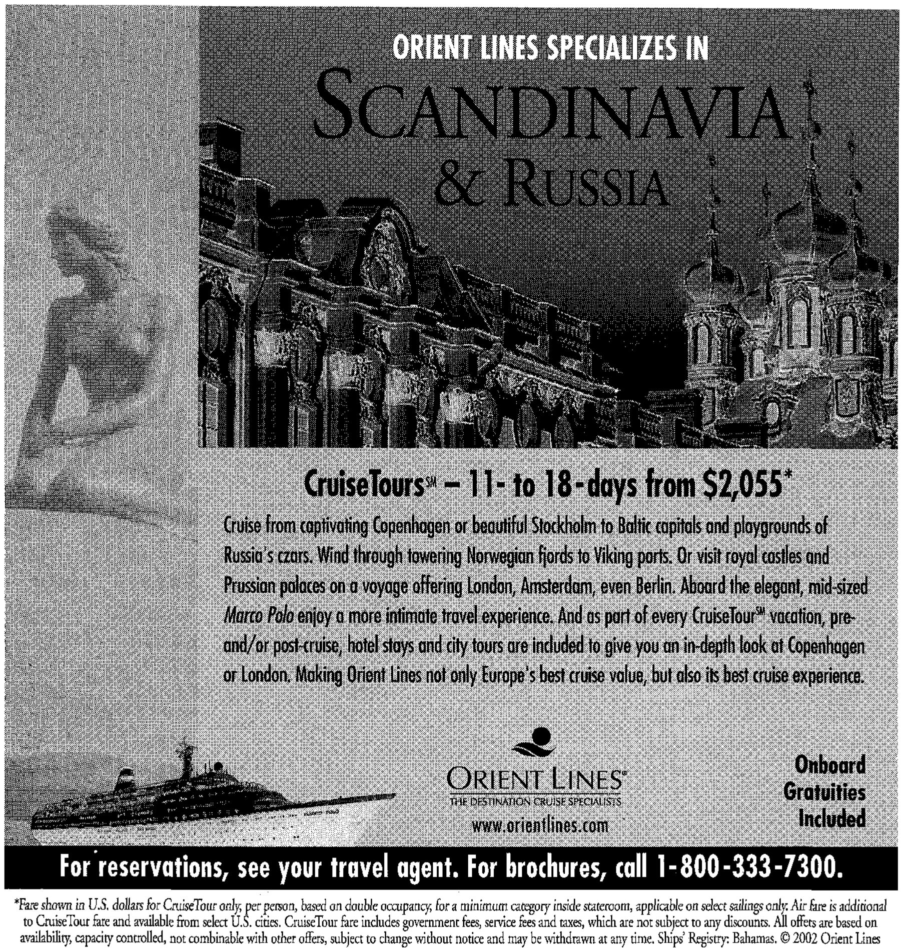
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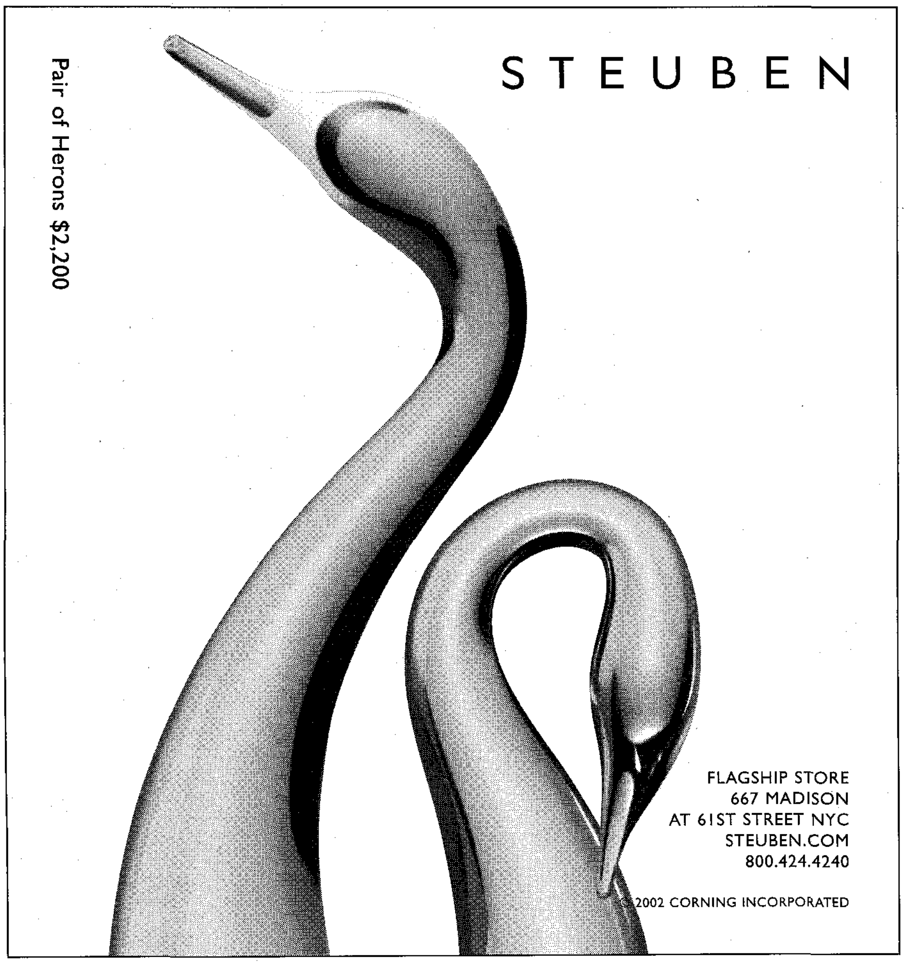
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music's rough-hewn edge owes more to American punk rock than it does to the Grand Ol' Opry.

BOTTOM LINE
15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Nov. 29: **Marshall Crenshaw** and **Dave Edmunds,** two refugees from the New Wave, may not have scaled the heights that their peer Elvis Costello did, but they found modest and creditable success in power pop and roots rock, respectively. Despite their affiliation with the Day-Glo eighties, Crenshaw and Edmunds take their cues from the fifties and sixties, crafting rock that is accessible and timeless.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Nov. 29-30: **Luna's** endearing, lo-fi music is full of nods to their downtown Manhattan forefathers, the Velvet Underground and Television.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Nov. 29-30: Belying the latter half of their name, **Sonic Youth** have come a long way since their days as irreverent, arty upstarts with a penchant for feedback and discord. They continue to influence a new generation of bands. Case in point is their choice of opening acts, from post-rock noiseniks like the **Liars,** on opening night, to the austere, experimental hardcore of **Black Dice** and **Lightning Bolt,** on the following night.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (539-8777)—Nov. 27: The campy Cuban chanteuse **Margarita Pracatan** (whose last name is a Spanish exclamation meaning, as she tirelessly reminds you, more or less, "presto!," "yippee!," and "wow!") is the kind of entertainer who considers a concert mainly an occasion to tell her fans that she loves them—many, many times. And she just might mean it. A veteran of the London cabaret circuit, the avowedly celibate erstwhile men's-underwear salesperson performs unabashedly bawdy interpretations (or is it skewerings?) of such hits as "I Will Survive" and Abba's "Take a Chance on Me." Sharing the bill is New York's **Scissor Sisters,** who blend falsetto funk, disco anthems, and punk rock—and that's just on their cover of Pink Floyd's "Comfortably Numb."

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Nov. 29: The **Roots.** Hip-hop groups generally aren't known for their musicianship, but this Philadelphia (a.k.a. Illadelphia) outfit has built its reputation on using real instruments to create an authentically funky, quintessentially musical (as opposed to digital) backdrop. They're playing small local venues in support of their new release, "Phrenology." Nov. 30: The witty pop of the Berlin-based **Stereo Total.**

NORTHSIX
66 N. 6th St., Williamsburg (718-599-5103)—Nov. 27: **Drums & Tuba** laces its loop-filled songs with New Orleans-style grooves and some progressive-rock guitar heroics.

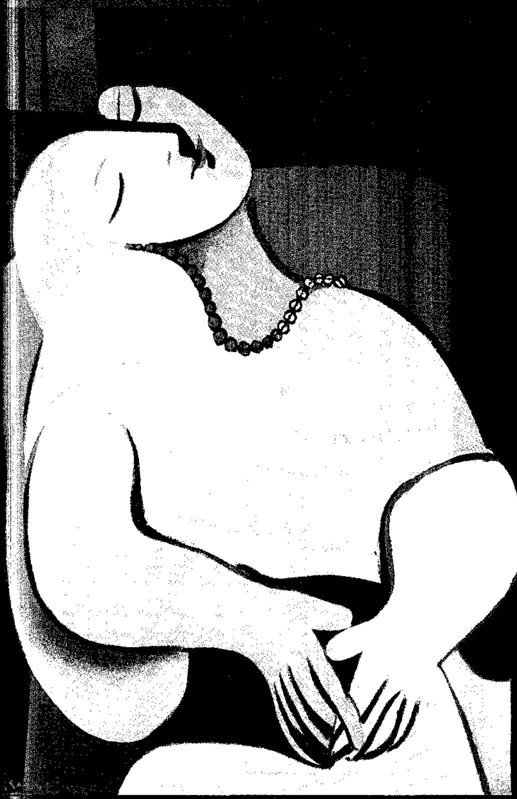
SLIPPER ROOM
167 Stanton St. (253-7246)—Dec. 3: **Carol Lipnik,** a singer with a multi-octave range, stops by with her band Spookarama. She'll be performing songs from her new album, "Hope Street." Lipnik's moody voice conveys the eerie feeling of being stuck at midnight in the middle of the winter in Coney Island, the neighborhood of her youth.

SOUTHPAW
125 Fifth Ave., Park Slope (718-230-0236)—Nov. 29: One of the founding fathers of New York's willfully dissonant and short-lived No Wave scene in the late seventies, Brazilian-born **Arto Lindsay** went on to embrace the zesty pop of his homeland with the Ambitious Lovers. Nov. 30: Chicago's **Handsome Family** traffics in eerie gothic country, and their live shows are full of intimate banter between the husband and wife Brett and Rennie Sparks.

VILLAGE UNDERGROUND
130 W. 3rd St. (777-7745)—Nov. 27: **Eyes Adrift** combines Krist Novoselic and Bud Gaugh, sidemen for Nirvana and Sublime, respectively, and the Meat Puppets guitarist Curt Kirkwood. They are less a supergroup than a survivors' group; as a result, their back stories are more interesting than

"Not to be missed by anyone who cares about modern art."
—THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

MATISSE PICASSO



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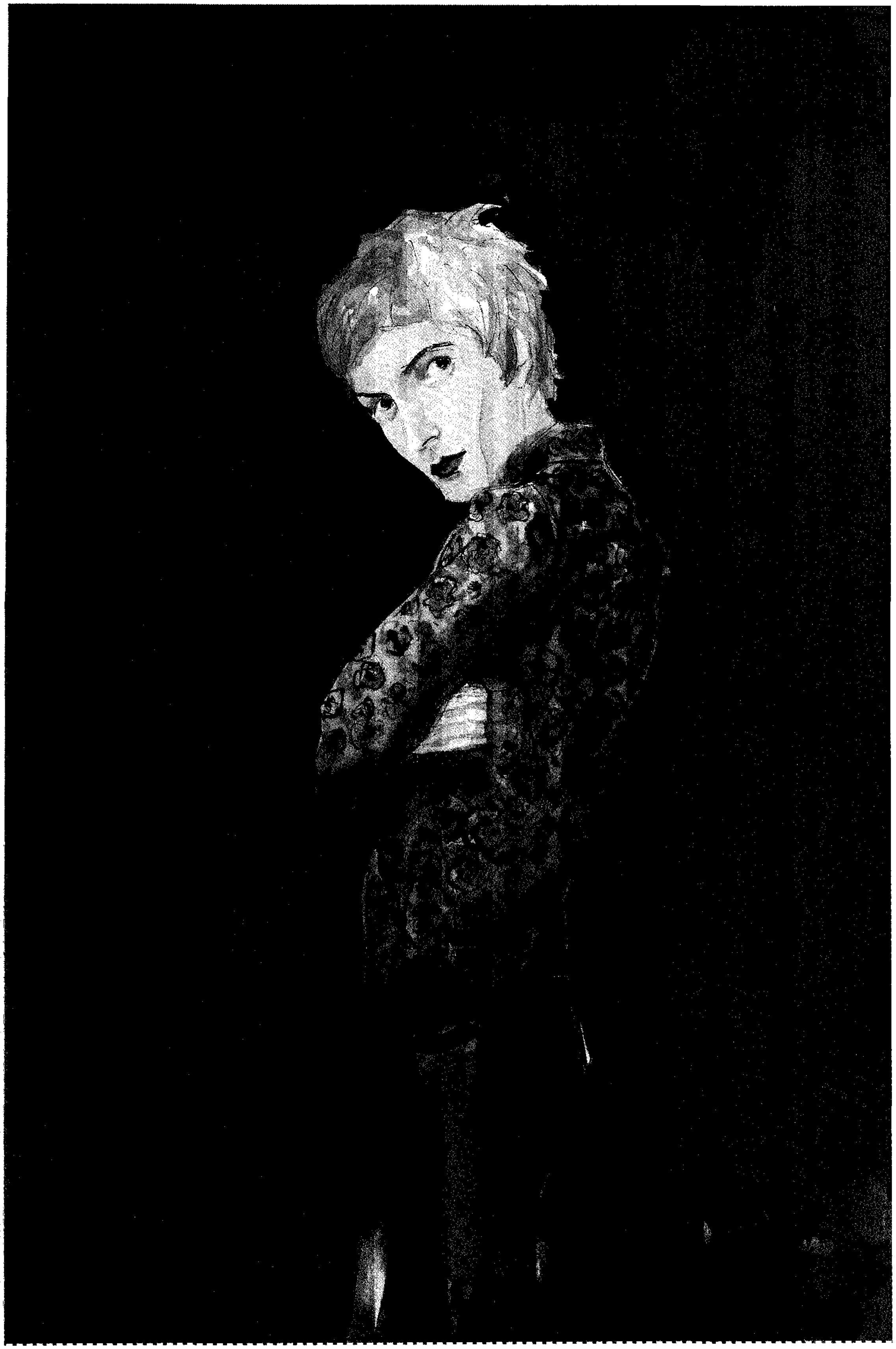

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Elizabeth Peyton. **Scott Walker**. 1996. Watercolor on paper. Collection Susan and Michael Hort. **Drawing Now** is supported by the Lily Auchincloss Foundation, Inc., Friends of Contemporary Drawing of The Museum of Modern Art, and Martin and Rebecca Eisenberg. Additional funding is provided by Patricia and Morris Orden, the Mondriaan Foundation, Dianne Wallace and Lowell Schulman, Pro Helvetia, Dorothy Bandier, Hilary Jane Rubenstein, The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art, and The Contemporary Arts Council of The Museum of Modern Art. The accompanying publication is made possible by an anonymous donor. The accompanying educational programs are made possible by BNP Paribas.

their songs. Nov. 29: The soul singer **Howard Tate** likes to take his time between albums. His first was in 1966, and he's recorded only two others since then. The word is that after last year's comeback tour he's at work on another. Nov. 30: A late night of salsa with **Jimmy Bosch.**

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—The cabaret icon **Andrea Marcovicci,** currently at work in the woody nook known as the Oak Room, may not always have a dulcet tone, but her masterly interpretive skills and her charming way with an anecdote more than compensate for the rough spots in her delivery. She's performing the can't-lose love songs of Cole Porter through Jan. 11.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through Dec. 1: **Eddie Palmieri** may be one of the founding fathers of modern Latin music, but he isn't resting on his laurels. His taut ensemble La Perfecta II takes up where his earlier bands left off, melding post-bop jazz with the rhythmic momentum and orchestral heft of salsa; the leader's stream-of-consciousness piano and the trumpeter **Brian Lynch's** soaring excursions provide plenty of improvisational zest.

BOTTOM LINE
15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Dec. 3: **Eliane Elias,** a pianist and singer who integrates the rhythmic felicities and sensual delivery of her native Brazil into sophisticated jazz playing, receives support from the drummer **Satoshi Takeishi** and the bassist **Marc Johnson.**

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (339-4095)—Through Dec. 28: The poised and likable balladeer **Michael Feinstein** ushers in the season with a program that touches on holiday fare as well as a special tribute to his friend and mentor, the late Rosemary Clooney. His special guest, **Gloria Reuben,** who may be best known for her dramatic stint on "E.R.," branches out into the vocal realm.

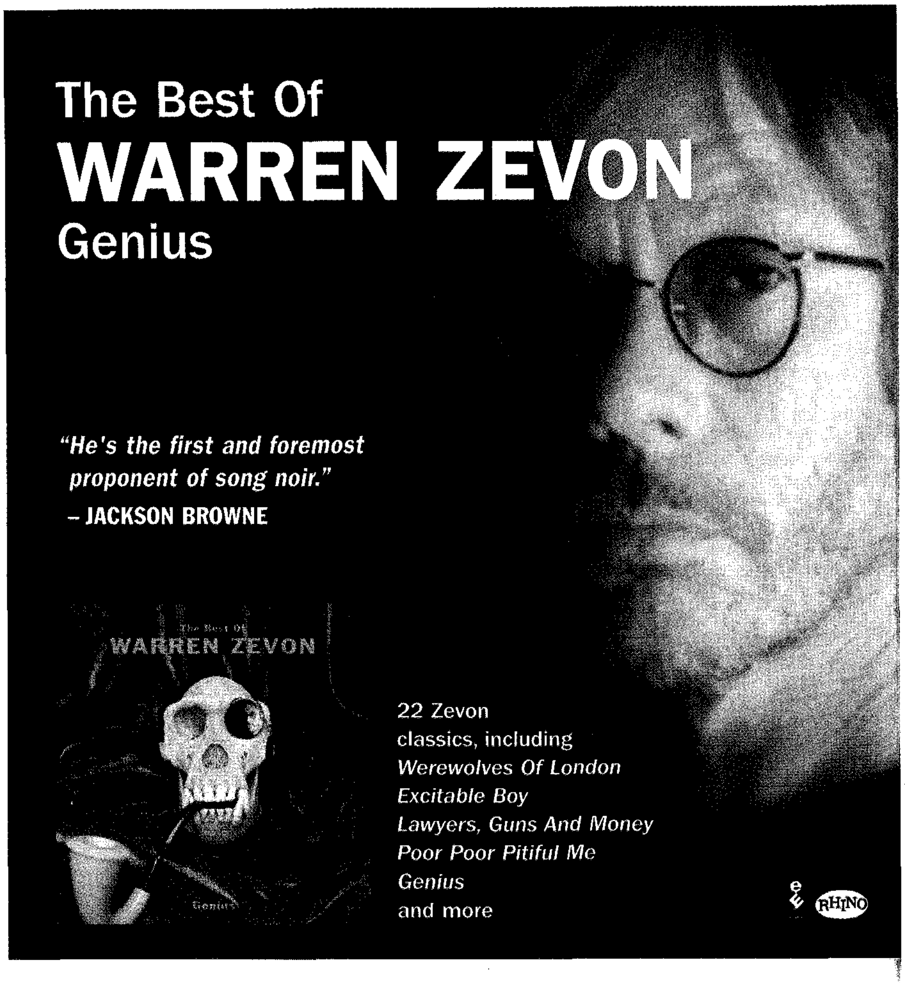
IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (582-2121)—Through Dec. 1: Like far too many contemporary jazz guitarists, **Mike Stern** has a bad case of run-on fingers, but his silken tone and flair for bounding bebop phrasing lift him above the fray. This Miles Davis vet can also turn up the juice and plunge into nasty rock-tinged lines. Here he has a Bentley of a fusion rhythm team in the bassist **Victor Wooten** and the drummer **Dave Weckl.** The electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul** takes over on Mondays.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Two singers deserving of wider attention split the week. Nov. 26-27 belongs to **Carla Cook.** On her 2001 album, "Dem Bones," Cook stood up to a cadre of trombonists, and she brings that same extroverted forthrightness to the stage. She brightens the room with her vitality and fervor. A late starter who's making up for lost time, **René Marie** (here Nov. 29-Dec. 1) brings a fresh new lilt to material ranging from the Beatles' "Blackbird" to Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit." Dining.

SWEET RHYTHM
88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (255-3626)—Nov. 28-30: There's an almost sensual pleasure in watching great drummers like **Victor Lewis.** Every move is smooth, perfectly balanced, and seemingly effortless. For the sublime lift he brings to a bandstand, Lewis's bandmates should pay him. Dining.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (358-7503)—Nov. 29: **Jamaaladeen Tacuma,** the electric bassist whose exhaustive technique and left-of-center imagination spiked the music of Ornette Coleman during that grand innovator's initial electric phase.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Nov. 26-Dec. 1: **Jason Moran's** recent solo recital "Mod-



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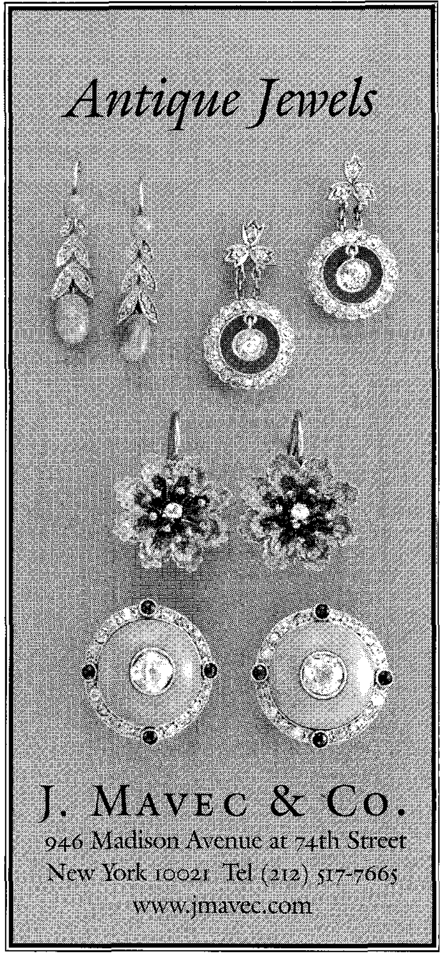

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ernistic," which finds him retooling work by everyone from James P. Johnson to Afrika Bambaataa, is another accomplishment for the brilliant young pianist, but he truly comes alive when interacting with his volatile trio-mates, the bassist **Tarus Mateen** and the drummer **Nasheet Waits.** The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART

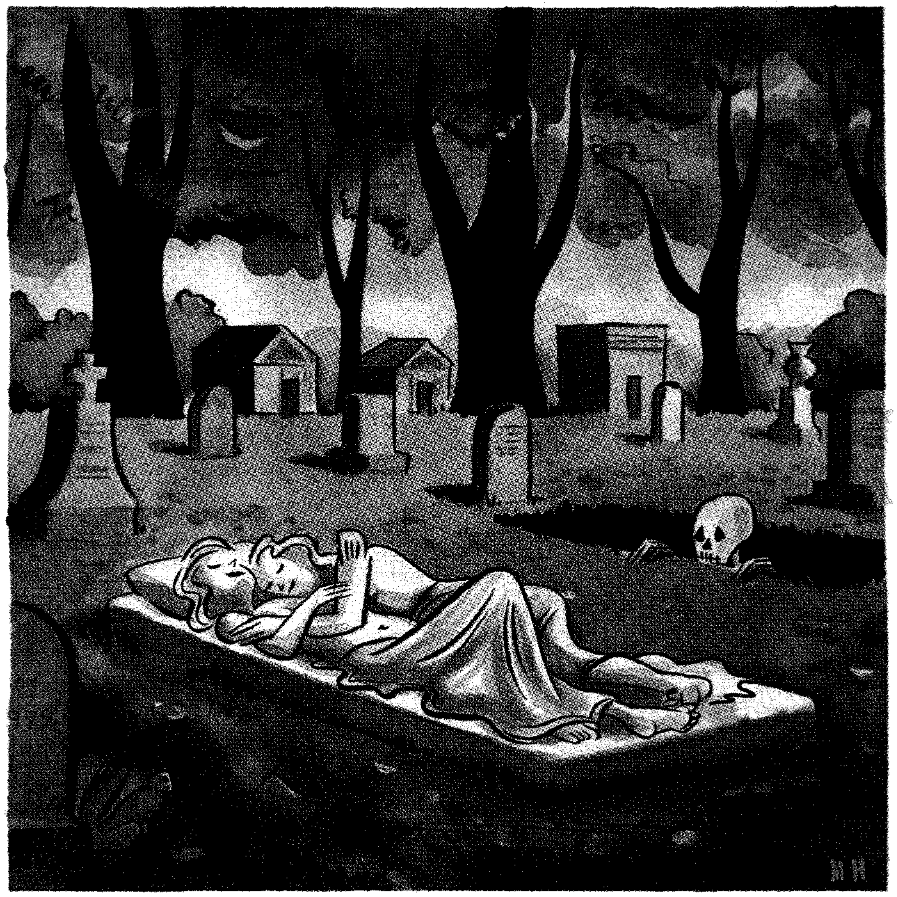
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—Théodore Chassériau (1819-56) was an unqualified success in his own lifetime. He was apprenticed to Ingres at the age of twelve, won his first medal in a Paris Salon at eighteen, and then, at twenty-seven, jilted the neoclassic ideal for a lusty Romanticism à la Delacroix, whom he followed to North Africa. Then he died young—his first bad career move. Soon afterward, the Paris Commune of 1871 destroyed his most famous public murals, and he slipped into obscurity. Unfortunately, he seems to have deserved the posthumous downgrade—his sultry harem girls, dashing chevaliers, and pouty-lipped society sitters are agreeable to look at and unchallenging to contemplate. No wonder he received so many government commissions. Through Jan. 5. ♦ **"The Prints of Vija Celmins."** Through Dec. 29. ♦ **"Richard Avedon: Portraits."** Through Jan. 5. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA QNS)
33rd St. at Queens Blvd., Long Island City (708-9480)—**"Drawing Now: Eight Propositions,"** a trailblazing show curated by Laura Hoptman, sets the MOMA seal of approval on twenty-six youngish international artists working in the medium that's been the bedrock of visual art since Lascaux. Hoptman's "propositions" identify current modes of drawing, including illustration, decoration, fashion, architectural and scientific drafting, and comics. The show suggests a forge of styles, in which artists hammer out new links between craft, discipline, and worldly import. Some—John Currin, Elizabeth Peyton, Neo Rauch, Ugo Rondinone—are farther along than others, but nearly all convey the exhilaration of being onto something. For the first time in quite a while at a museum group show, exacting comparison, argument, and judgment seem to be a matter of course. Don't miss this. Through Jan. 6. ♦ **"The Changing of the Avant-Garde: Visionary Architectural Drawings from the Howard Gilman Collection."** Through Jan. 6. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 10 to 5, and Friday evenings until 7:45.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—Hollywood disaster flick meets Renaissance fresco (think "The Poseidon Adventure" with art direction by Fra Angelico) in **"Going Forth by Day,"** Bill Viola's visually striking five-channel video piece commissioned by a German bank for the Guggenheim Berlin. In one projection, an eclectic procession traipses through a light-dappled forest (the panoramic image evokes old-fashioned CinemaScope). In an adjacent scene, water gushes from the windows and doors of a pristine building façade. Death and resurrection figure elsewhere in the action, as Viola tackles Big Themes. The work was conceived before the events of September 11th, and the portent of disaster is uncanny if you can handle the smugly pious tone. Through Jan. 12. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—Richard Serra gets a goth remake in Tom Burr's purple plywood homage to the older artist's infamous "Tilted Arc," which is currently installed in the sculpture court at the Whitney Museum. (Serra's sculpture was removed from the plaza of a federal office building in lower Manhattan in the late eighties.) From the back, "Deep Purple" resembles a theatrical flat, and the knots in the plywood create a psychedelic moiré effect that is playfully antithetical to Serra's sombre Cor-Ten steel. At roughly two-thirds the scale of the original sculpture, the piece is the art-historical equivalent of the Stonehenge model in "This Is Spinal Tap." Unfortunately, it fails to transcend its own satire and remains little more than a punch line. Through Jan. 5. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6; Fridays, 1 to 9.)



The sculptor Patricia Cronin's "Memorial to a Marriage," at Woodlawn Cemetery.

MARCELLUS HALL

MORGAN LIBRARY
29 E. 36th St. (685-0008)—Stuart Davis was twenty-one years old when the Armory Show of 1913 introduced him to Cubism. Shaken, he set out to renovate his understanding of picture-making. His investigations led him toward a distinctly American version of Cubist space, in which subways, diners, gas stations, and Lucky Strike packages replaced Parisian newspapers and café tables. It's as if, in imitating Braque and Picasso, Davis prefigured not only Hopper and Rockwell but Warhol as well. The Morgan recently acquired Davis's earliest extant journal and a sketchbook filled with seventy-four working drawings. An elegantly focussed series of twelve paintings and finished drawings, including several loaned by the artist's son, puts these two books in context. Through Dec. 15. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5; Fridays, 10:30 to 8; Saturdays, 10:30 to 6; Sundays, noon to 6.)

GALLERIES-UPTOWN

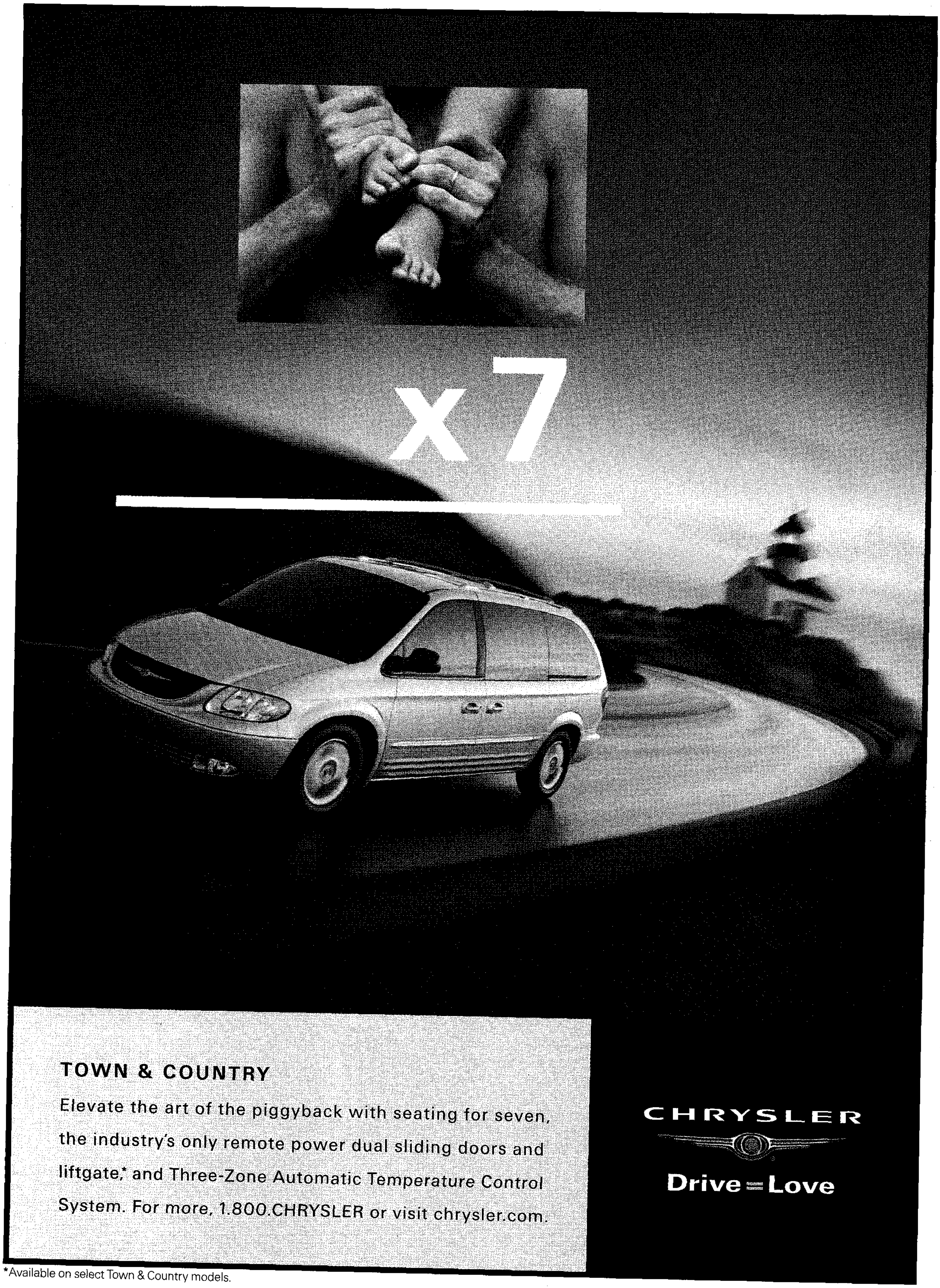
Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

ANTHONY CARO
These unabashedly narrative sculptures were born in a London junk shop when a collection of vaulting horses caught the eye of the knighted British artist. Caro transformed the cast-off equipment into a horde of barbarians on horseback with slabs of terra-cotta, chunks of wood, and steel rods standing in for heads, limbs, and weapons. (The raw appearance of the unglazed clay recalls Caro's seminal work in rusted steel as well as his ceramic experiments of the eighties.) The figures' solidity and menace are laced with a playfulness, like nursery toys sprung to life in a child's nightmare. Through Dec. 20. (Mitchell-Innes & Nash, 1018 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 744-7400.)

CY TWOMBLY
Thirty-eight drawings, collectively titled "Letter of Resignation," made between 1959 (the year Twombly moved to Rome) and 1967 (a year before he started the blackboard paintings). Insistent and indecipherable graphite scrawls are punctuated by colored pencil in Bic-pen blue and blotches of creamy house paint. The most epistolary are crammed with line after line of cursive that mimics handwriting; others resemble abstract to-do lists with numbers assigned to furiously crossed-out items. The drawings reveal an artist who is simultaneously staunch and unpredictable, his heels dug into unfathomable terrain. Through Jan. 4. (Zwirner & Wirth, 32 E. 69th St. 517-8677.)

JEFF KOONS AND ANDY WARHOL
The gallery says it with flowers. In the main gallery, more than sixty Warhol floral canvases from 1964 are installed alongside eleven sculptures by Koons, from a 1979 inflatable flower to three polychromed wood sculptures from 1991 (there's even a pair of rosy-cheeked cherubs hovering high on the wall). The Warhols look effortless, while the eager-to-please Koonses seem to bead up with sweat from exertion. A reminder that without Andy there could never have been Jeff. Through Dec. 21. (Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. 744-2313.)

"ART OF THE SAMURAI"
The suit of armor guarding the first floor of this three-story show includes floral-motif shin guards, a chain-mail skirt, barrel-shaped shoulder guards, and a helmet sporting both Viking-style horns and a ferocious mini pug, launching himself down the



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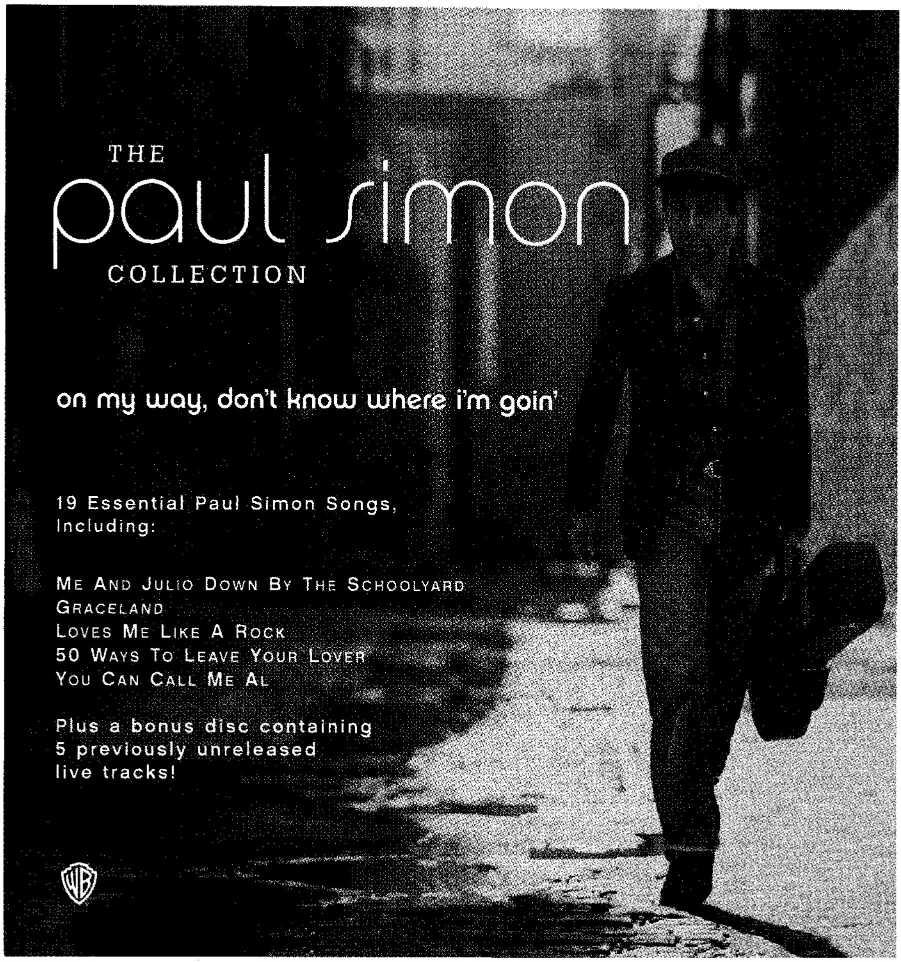

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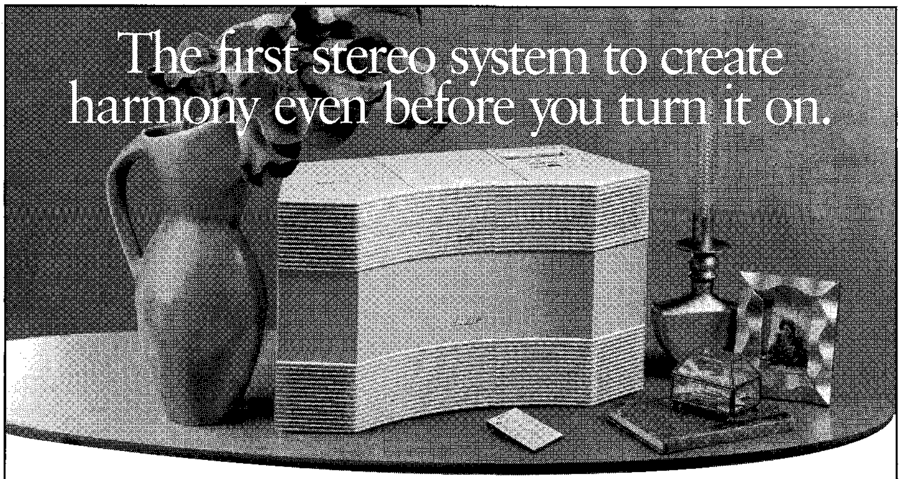

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brim. Taller and fussier helmets wait upstairs, some trimmed in gold and fur, one defended by a malevolent, red-eyed rabbit. As if that's not scary enough, many helmets were also fitted with masks for the lower face, to protect and embellish warriors' cheeks and chins. A procession of these jaw protectors present baroque variations of the scowl and grimace. Through Dec. 6. (Scholten Japanese Art, 63 E. 66th St. 585-0474.)

Short List

OSCAR BLUEMNER
James Graham, 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 535-5767. Through Dec. 7.
JOSEPH CORNELL
Stone, 113 E. 90th St. 987-4997.
Through Dec. 20.
PETER DOIG
Werner, 4 E. 77th St. 988-1623. Through Jan. 18.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

ANSELM KIEFER
An exhibition so complex and grand that you might want to bring along an overnight bag and a stepladder to absorb it. Seven colossal paintings, one of them twenty feet high, advance themes of Cabalistic mysticism in visions of starry skies overlaid with handwritten words and numbers, diagrams, crumpled sheets of lead, and other vatic appurtenances. (Harold Bloom, making his first foray into art criticism, has provided a suitably plangent catalogue introduction.) There are rugged sculptures of poured concrete, bristling with rusty rebar. One of them, a procession of stacked wave forms, is more than eighty feet long and given the epigram of a line, in French, from Saint-Jean Perse: "The same wave through the world the same wave since Troy rolls its haunch to us." Through Dec. 14. (Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 741-1111.)

GUILLERMO KUITCA / WOLFGANG LAIB
The Argentinean artist based this large and odd show on Wagner's "Ring Cycle," or, rather, on album covers for famous recordings of same. His true subject, however, seems to be the sterility of such grand but often vacant spaces as opera houses, airports, and cathedrals. The dry, almost forensic tone of elegy in Kuitca's work continues in Sperone's smaller gallery with a sculpture by German artist Wolfgang Laib. But Laib's work is even more enigmatic, and the sense of isolation is ecstatic rather than forlorn. Compared with Kuitca's spectacles of emptiness, Laib's barn-shaped block of pale marble surrounded by ivory-colored grains of rice, and his gorgeous "Milk Stone," a white marble slab topped by a shallow, milk-filled reservoir, conjure a world of luscious purity where stone can turn to milk. Through Dec. 15. (Sperone Westwater, 415 W. 13th St. 999-7337.)

Short List

KARIN DAVIE
Mary Boone, 541 W. 24th St. 752-2929.
Through Dec. 21.
DUNCAN HANNAH
JG Contemporary, 505 W. 28th St. 564-7662.
Through Dec. 21.
ALEXI WORTH
Maynes, 529 W. 20th St. 741-3318.
Through Dec. 21.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

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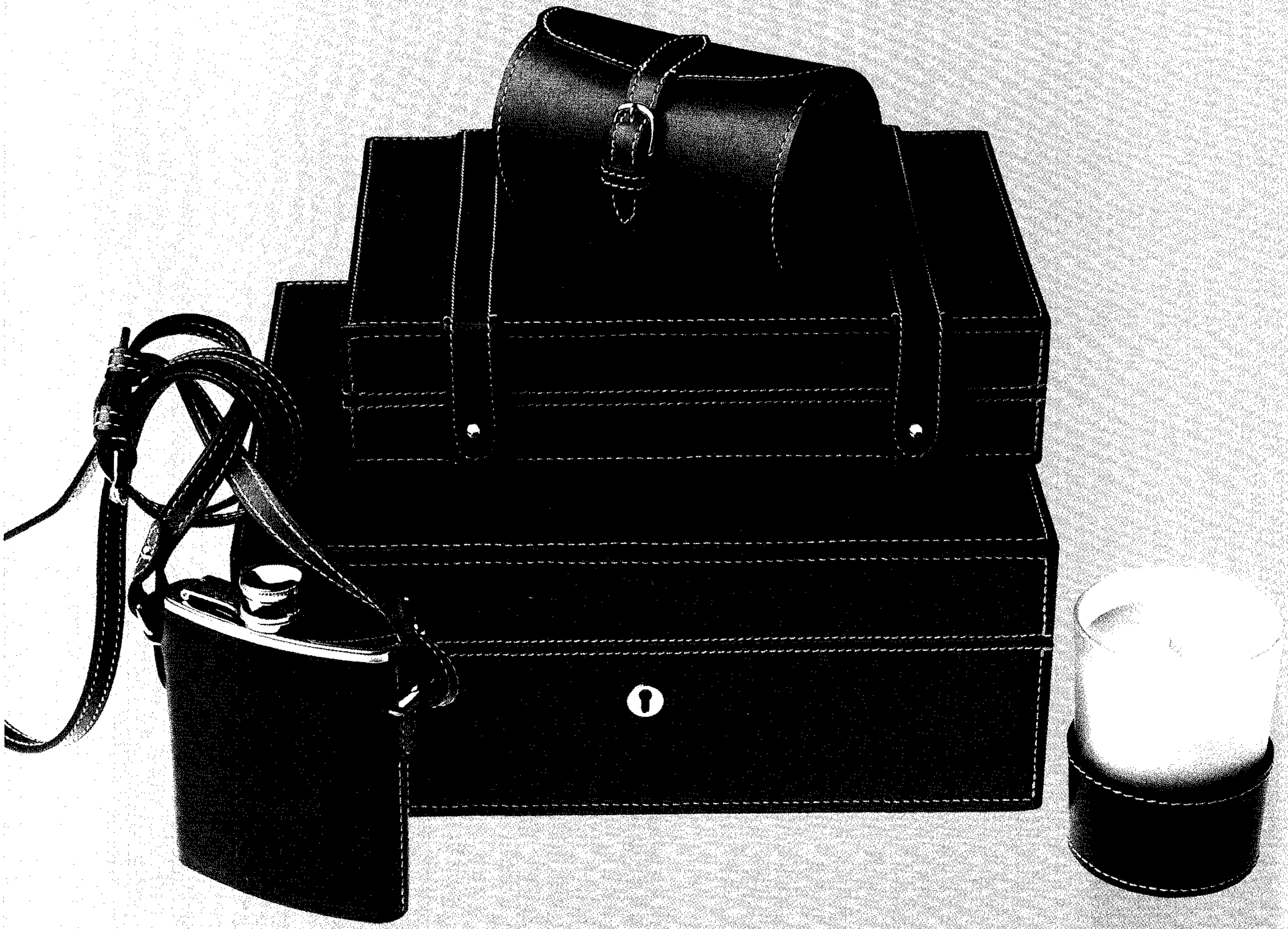

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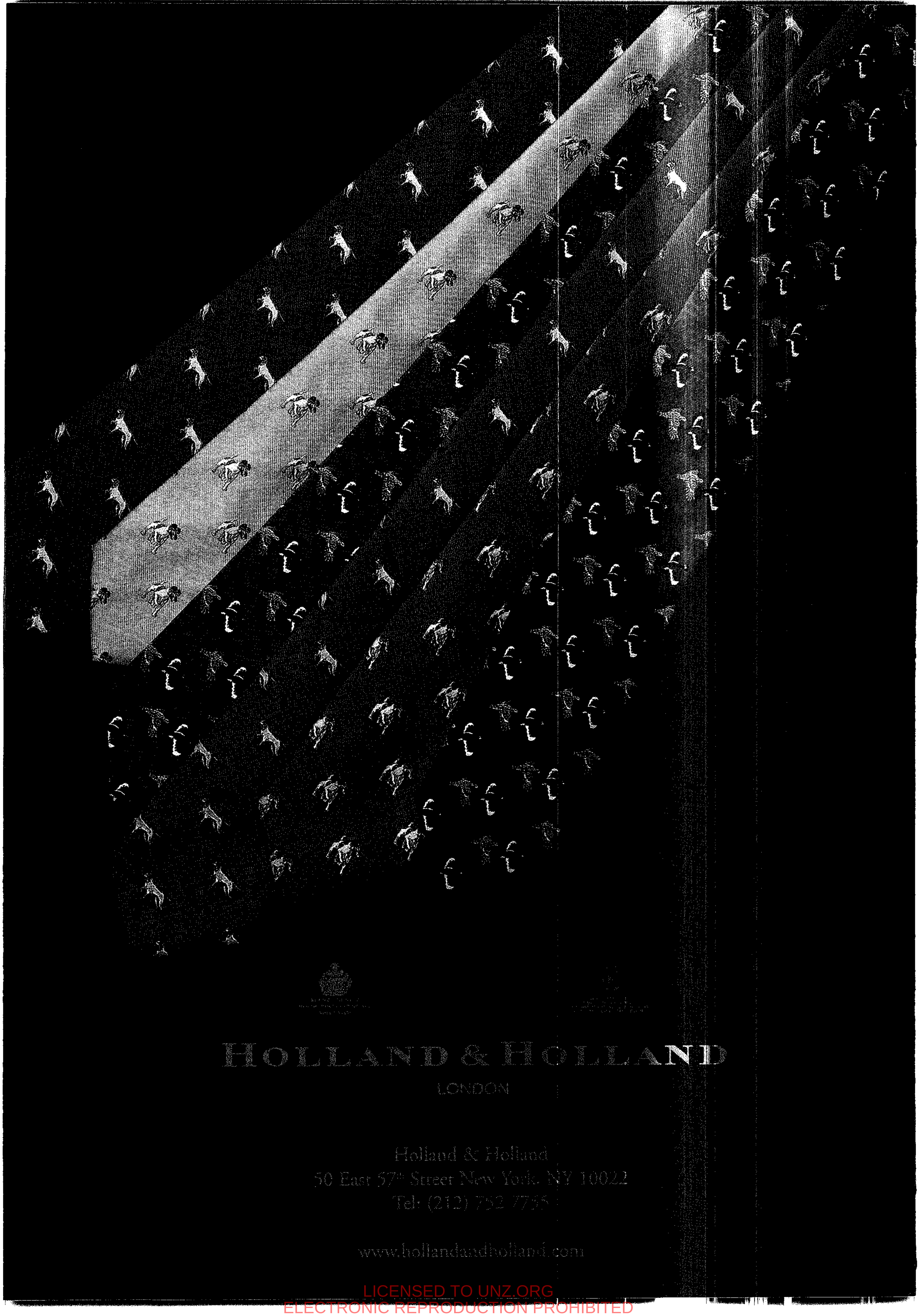

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"Self-Portrait with Black and White Couple," by Ryan Weideman, at Bruce Silverstein.

Is the artist mocking you? Of course he is. He is David Hammons, the imperturbable. Through Feb. 1. (275 Hudson St. 255-5599.)

"SONIC GARDEN"
Workers have reconstructed the Winter Garden's curved glass arcade and replanted its courtyard with palm trees just in time for its nominal season. The bouncy acoustics in the space are perfect for this selection of contemporary sound pieces, played at scheduled intervals. Laurie Anderson sends out one sweet melodic line from a violin, which reverberates as though the atrium were her instrument, and Marina Rosenfeld takes advantage of the new wiring to skip notes from speaker to speaker. David Byrne appoints himself ventriloquist of the trees, which, via hidden speakers, speak the one-liners of Henny Youngman and other Catskills comedians. Through Nov. 30. (Winter Garden, World Financial Center. 206-6674. For a listening schedule, visit www.creativetime.org.)

Short List

CHRIS JOHANSON
Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 343-7300.
Through Dec. 21.

CÉSAR PATERNOSTO AND CECILIA VICUÑA
The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. 219-2166.
Through Dec. 20.

GALLERIES–THE BRONX

PATRICIA CRONIN
The genteel, well-tended lanes of Woodlawn Cemetery, lined with Greek-revival family mausoleums, don't see much new construction. So when the sculptor Patricia Cronin, under the auspices of Deitch Projects, pulled up to the corner of Prospect and Walnut Avenues with a marble sculpture of herself in bed with her partner, the painter Deborah Kass, her monument to the living stood out. The machine-carved, hand-finished work, patterned after nineteenth-century memorial statuary, shows Cronin on her back with Kass at her side. Their curls mingle on a single crooked pillow, and their legs nestle under a softly draping sheet, which doesn't keep fall leaves from collecting at their sides, or prevent a birdbath-like puddle from forming in the central hollow at their hipbones. Through eternity. (Webster Ave. at 233rd St., the Bronx. 718-920-0500.)

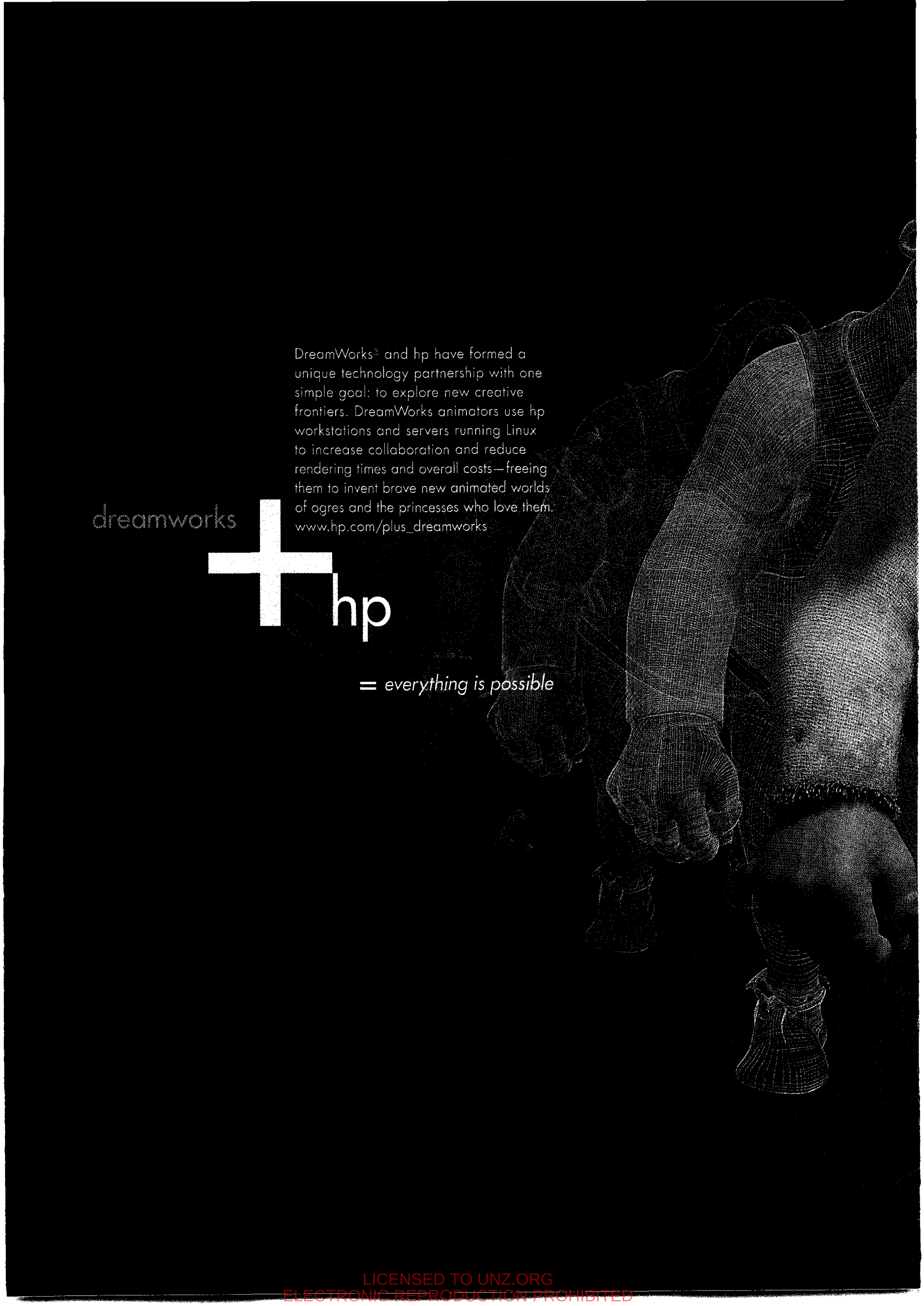
PHOTOGRAPHY

DANIEL KATZENSTEIN
Through his use of a Brownie camera—the boxy, fixed-lens plaything popular in the nineteen-fifties—Katzenstein has released himself from the technical demands of contemporary photographers. Because he can only point and shoot (no focussing allowed), the supersaturated color images have a vitality (and blurriness) that's more travelogue than social criticism. Katzenstein's pictures were taken in the nineteen-eighties in developing countries, and he extracts from the local colors a painterly effect—a Peruvian girl's face smiles across the frame, her reed-thatched village just coming into focus several feet behind her—which melds a sense of joy with the sensibility of Bonnard. Through Dec. 18. (In Camera, 511 W. 25th St. 647-7667.)

GABRIEL OROZCO
Big digital color photographs, fourteen from Mali and two from Mexico, show that this versatile Mexican artist is also a world-champion tourist. Who else would discover that a makeshift mosque and cemetery (graves marked with clay pots amid drifting sand) in Timbuktu are crowning masterpieces of Arte Povera, and that a bicycle leaned against an uprooted desert tree says everything worth knowing about globalism? Orozco does intervene at times, setting broken bricks and brick dust on mounds outside a Mexican village to turn the place into a shamanistic site. Mostly, though, all he does is snap a picture, somehow creating rather than just recording placeness. Through Jan. 4. (Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 977-7160.)

MICHAEL SPANO
About two dozen surreal streetscapes cover more than twenty years of this Bronx-born artist's exploration of city life. And while the multi-image and multiply exposed photographs document Spano's enduring love affair with special lenses and darkroom wizardry, the technical bravura on display never distracts from the real business at hand. "Counting," with its cascading flowers, beer cans, money, and solarized bodies, verges on collage as resonant and painterly as a Rauschenberg. The vertical juxtaposition of "Taxi and Child Carrier" evokes a sense of everyday catharsis, and "Vertical Subway," an impossibly angled panorama of shirtless straphangers, brooding Rastafarians, and thoroughly exhausted children, broils with sensuality and attitude worthy of the city Spano chronicles. Through Dec. 21. (Laurence Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 397-3930.)

RYAN WEIDEMAN
Weideman makes his living driving a cab, and, when his passengers agree to it, makes art by snapping their portraits in the back seat. The results are dense images that chronicle more than two decades of lower Manhattanites. "Self-Portrait with Woman and Cat" is a study in jolting contrast that pits big-city sophistication against urban loneliness. "Self-Portrait with Vampire and Nymphet" packs a potent dose of dark perversity, while "Six Girl Crack-Up," a rare early picture in which Weideman doesn't appear, is an innocent burst of bottled-blond joy. The tour de force, "Self-Portrait with Salsa Betty," frames a menacingly explicit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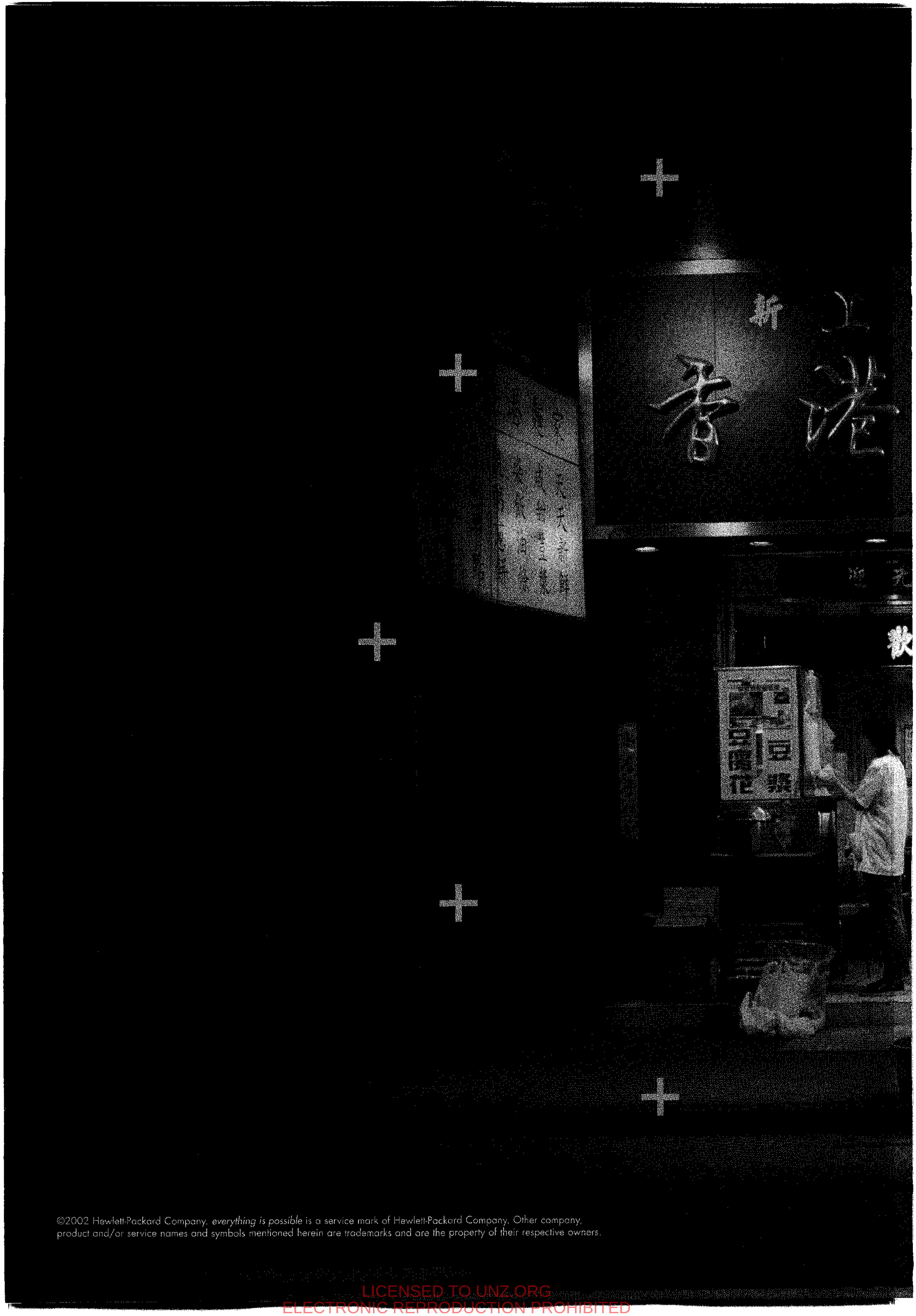

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peep show behind the taxi's plastic partition, while in the foreground Weideman's sad eyes bear witness to the viewer's voyeurism. Through Jan. 5. (Bruce Silverstein, 504 W. 22nd St. 627-3930.)

TOM WOOD
In the early nineteen-eighties, Wood, with an ethnographer's eye, snapped the denizens of the Chelsea Reach, the first discothèque in Northern England, as they primped, fought with the doorman, drank, danced, and made out in a bleary-eyed reverie. The fashions alone (satin jumpsuit anyone?) are cringe-worthy, but the emotional depth Wood was able to capture in each frame is a marvel. The work mixes the aesthetic of Nan Goldin (with cleaner hair) with the studious monomania of the Bechers. Note the three couples on the dance floor (one laughing, another chastely kissing, and the third all hands and tongues), a group anxiously waiting for the rest room, or the woman pinking her lips under flashing red lights, and remember that it was fun at the time. Through Dec. 21. (Erben, 516 W. 20th St. 645-8701.)

Short List

CHAN CHAO
Richardson, 535 W. 22nd St. 646-230-9610.
Through Nov. 30.

LAUREN GREENFIELD / JUDITH JOY ROSS
Pace/MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999.
Through Nov. 30.

SYLVIA PLACHY
Bateman, 560 Broadway. 925-7951.
Through Nov. 30.

GARY WINOGRAND
International Center of Photography,
1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. 857-0000.
Through Dec. 1.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
Dec. 3 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: A sale of carpets, including items from India, Central Asia, Persia (a seventeenth-century Isphahan carpet, estimated to bring around a hundred thousand dollars), France, and England. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

PHILLIPS
Dec. 3 at 2: Thirty-three paintings from the collection of Baron Thyssen-Bornemisza, the renowned European collector of nineteenth-century American art. The selections include works by Bierstadt, Church, Moran ("Badlands of the Dakota," expected to bring up to nine hundred thousand dollars), and Chase, along with modern paintings by Benton, Weber, and Kuhn. (3 W. 57th St. 940-1200.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
Perhaps no production shows the Met to better advantage than Sonja Frisell's magnificent 1988 staging of **"Aida,"** with its breathtaking sets, huge cast, and lovingly rendered period detail. Michele Crider, Irina Mishura, Richard Margison, Alexandru Agache, and Matti Salminen take the leading roles; Marco Armiliato conducts. (Nov. 27 at 7:30.) ♦ Nicolas Joël's 1998 production of **"Lucia di Lammermoor"** returns to the house with its original Lucia, Ruth Ann Swenson. Swenson is one of the Met's most reliable properties (her coloratura is as dazzling as ever), but the male leads bring more excitement to their tasks. The tenor Marcelo Álvarez, as Edgardo, is learning to combine Pavarotti's sense of sound with Domingo's sense of drama, and Anthony Michaels-Moore, as Enrico, has both an intense, trombonish baritone and a vivid way with words. Patrick Summers, the conductor, takes a rather blunt approach to the opera—Donizetti by way of Beethoven—but he is always a sensitive accompanist. (Nov. 29 at 8 and Dec. 2 at 7:30.) ♦ **"Fidelio,"** Beethoven's happy symphony of freedom and justice, gets a reality check in this revival of the Met's 2000 production. Taking this prison drama out of eighteenth-century Spain and dropping it into what seems like a modern banana republic doesn't do the piece any harm, though by the end the cruel realism of Jürgen Flimm's staging may seem, for some, a little remote from what the composer actually wanted to say. (Don Fernando, riding in to save the day, is no Prince Valiant but a hack in a blue suit; Marzelline, upon hearing that her betrothed, Fidelio, is a woman in disguise, crumples to the floor in shock; and the villainous Don Pizarro is not only arrested but bloodied up and left for dead.) Yet the same qualities that make the opera dramatically stiff—its symphonic structures, its inviolable idealism—keep it safe from directorial critique. The cast—which includes Waltraud Meier, Hei-Kyung Hong, Johan Botha, Richard Paul Fink, and Matti Salminen—could hardly be bettered, and Peter Schneider's leadership of the orchestra brings out the score's gentleness as well its power. (Traditionalists beware: the customary interpolation of the "Leonore" Overture No. 3 into the middle of the second act is eschewed.) (Nov. 30 at 1:30 and Dec. 3 at 7:30.) ♦ **"Il Trovatore,"** with Sondra Radvanovsky, Elena Zaremba, Franco Farina, Carlos Alvarez, and Rosendo Flores; Frédéric Chaslin conducts. (Nov. 30 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

TABLES FOR TWO

SALT
58 Macdougal St. (674-4968)—"I think this one's just Diamond Crystal kosher salt," said a guy who claimed to know, after dabbing grains from a salt dish onto his tongue. The salt snob (houndstooth sports coat, Canadian accent) peeked into the kitchen, via a mirror on the wall. "Also, I can see a blue box of Bazini walnuts, and behind that there's a red box. I know that red box." He voiced his astonishment at the lack of fleur de sel (the salt of the moment).

The other diners conceded the point, not only because the place is named after the stuff, but because in most respects, Melissa O'Donnell, the chef at Salt, seems so meticulous. Salt used to be called Stella; last fall, O'Donnell, one of Stella's three partners and a former chef at Le Zoo, reopened it with a stripped-down seasonal menu. The other night, each table was adorned with a gourd in a cachepot, and someone had written on the mirror, next to the list of house wines, "It's autumn! Eat butternut squash, beets & bread pudding."

Among the autumnal appetizers, the most startling was the cream-of-cauliflower soup with portobello mushrooms and truffle oil: it went down like a milkshake. The Salt Guy declared the risotto, with Parmesan cheese, caramelized onions, and baby leeks, "brothy and underdone"—but he was overruled. (Around this time it was also determined that the red box in the kitchen was not salt.)

Salt's house gimmick is that half the entrées are listed as "protein + 2," meaning that you can order, say, a whole dorade or a roasted duck breast, then choose two side dishes from a list of seven (leeks, slow-roasted eggplant, butternut-squash purée, pearl barley, and so forth), but it is hard not to let the chef just do the work. When the waitress came around with the main courses—a braised lamb shank with merguez sausage and white beans; a bold, smoky roasted salmon with chorizo and barley; veal saltimbocca with prosciutto; and just one protein + 2—the Salt Guy said to her, "Tell us about the salt."

She blushed. "The salt will be more interesting next time you come," she said. "Good salt is hard to find. Everyone says 'Fleur de sel, fleur de sel.' But Melissa didn't want to do that." Chastened, the Salt Guy tucked into his veal (not as rich as he'd hoped). Everyone else was quite happy, and, not long afterward, the woman across from him knocked over her glass, spilling red wine on the sleeve of the houndstooth jacket. No problem: Salt Guy knew how to deal with the stain. "Ah, salt!" he exclaimed, dumping a bunch of it on his sleeve. (Mondays through Saturdays for lunch and dinner. Entrées $12.50-$21.)

—*Nick Paumgarten*

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Christoph von Dohnányi uses his two weeks with the orchestra to introduce two outstanding young virtuosos. First comes the pianist Pierre-Laurent Aimard, renowned for his work in new music with Pierre Boulez, who will tackle two of the knottiest works in the concerto repertory, Janáček's Capriccio (for the left hand only) and Strauss's "Burleske"; Brahms's pastoral Second Symphony rounds out the program. (Nov. 27 and Dec. 3 at 7:30 and Nov. 29-30 at 8.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5656.)

HANDEL'S "JUDAS MACCABAEUS"
A new, one-hour Hanukkah version for young audiences of the majestic oratorio, with added narration by Jonathan Levi. Francisco Núñez conducts the Young People's Chorus of New York City and members of the Children's Orchestra Society. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5500. Dec. 1 at 3.)

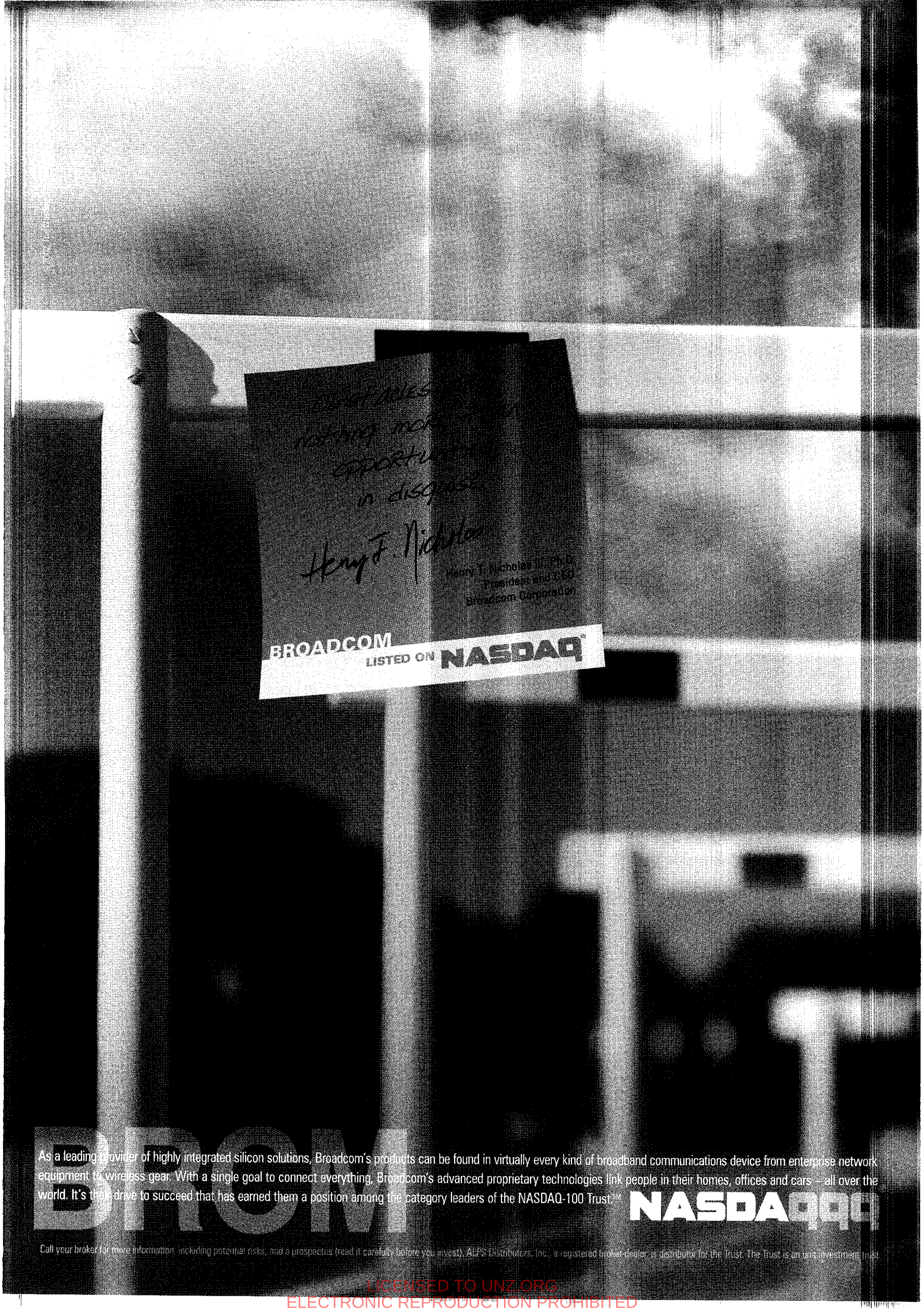
"VON HIMMEL HOCH": BACH AND THE CHRISTMAS CHORALE
Amid the crush of conventional holiday concerts, it's no surprise that George Steel, executive director of Columbia's Miller Theatre, is calling a different tune: that of "Von Himmel Hoch," a Christmas chorale by Martin Luther that inspired not only works by Bach (including Parts I and II of the Christmas Oratorio) but also by Mendelssohn and Stravinsky (the rarely heard "Canonic Variations"). Steel, conducting his Vox Vocal Ensemble and Gotham City Orchestra, performs them with the assistance of Timothy Smith, the organist of Riverside Church, where the concert takes place. (Riverside Dr. at 120th St. 854-7799. Dec. 3 at 8.)

RECITALS

BARGEMUSIC
The violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja, the violist Toby Hoffman, and others play two programs mixing German classics with a dash of Hungarian fire. Nov. 28-29 at 7:30: Haydn's "Rider" Quartet (Op. 74, No. 3), along with Kodály's Duo for Violin and Cello and Kreisler's String Quartet. ♦ Nov. 30 at 7:30 and Dec. 1 at 4: The pianist Christopher Hinterhuber joins the ensemble in another Haydn work (the Piano Trio in G Major, "Gypsy"), along with music by Bartók and Brahms (the Piano Quintet). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

ROCKHOTEL PIANOFEST
Nov. 30 at 8: In one of the series' most unusual offerings, the composer Philip Glass and his longtime colleague, the conductor Dennis Russell Davies, alternate at the keyboard to play such Glass works as "Mad Rush," "Metamorphosis I-V," and six new Études. They get together to perform "The Chase," a number from Glass's chamber opera "Orphée." ♦ Dec. 3 at 8: The eminent Slovenian pianist Dubravka Tomsic turns the festival back to the classical tradition, performing an all-Liszt program (including the Sonata and the first "Mephisto Waltz"). (Society Hall, Ethical Culture Society, 2 W. 64th St. 307-4100.)

THE QUEEN'S CHAMBER SOLOISTS: "VERMEER'S WORLD"
The harpsichordist Elaine Comparone—who, in a nod to Vermeer's "Woman Standing at the Virginals," plays, standing up, on a raised instrument—performs a concert of music by Sweelinck, Buxtehude, Byrd, Dowland, J. C. Bach, and other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near-contemporaries of the artist, with the countertenor Marshall Coid and the lutenist Jerry Willard. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Dec. 1 at 2.)

CONVIVIUM
This trio of violin, bass viol, and harpsichord was formerly known as the Locatelli Trio; with a change of name, they've decided to go beyond the Italian Baroque and take a deeper plunge into early-music repertory. Their concert at the Frick Collection includes works by J. S. Bach and François Couperin, along with pieces by Byrd ("My Ladye Nevels Grownde") and the Anglo-German violinist Thomas Baltzar (his "divisions," or variations, on "John Come Kiss Me Now"). (1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. Dec. 1 at 5.)

SANDRINE PIAU
The young French soprano, a favorite of nearly every early-music maestro you can name (including William Christie and Marc Minkowski), makes her New York recital début with music by Mozart, Debussy (three of the "Mélodies de Jeunesse"), and Strauss. Her pianist is Warren Jones. (Walter Reade Theatre, 165 W. 65th St. 721-6500. Dec. 2 at 7:30.)

SPECULUM MUSICAE
Jacob Druckman, who died in 1996, was one of America's most prominent composers—and a legendary power broker on the classical scene. The group's latest concert, planned as a seventy-fifth-anniversary tribute, offers two of his finest pieces (including the song cycle "Counterpoise," with the soprano Susan Narucki) along with works by three younger Americans, Stephen Jaffe, David Rakowski, and Andrew Byrne (a première), and by his colleague Mario Davidovsky. (Dec. 2 at 8. Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330.)

PETER KOLKAY
The superb young bassoonist, one of the winners of the 2002 Concert Artists Guild competition, makes his New York recital début with an intrepid program of Carter (the world première of "Retracing" and the New York première of "Au Quai"), Poulenc, Mozart, Weber, and Previn. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 333-5200, ext. 10. Dec. 3 at 7:30.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

READINGS
Dec. 1 at 3: Members of the New York Philharmonic assemble to read from the recently rediscovered nineteenth-century travel diary of Ureli Corelli Hill, the founder of the orchestra. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400.) ♦ Dec. 2 at 6: The writers Tom Beller, Douglas Century, Maggie Estep, and others share passages from Herbert Asbury's 1927 account of criminal behavior, "Gangs of New York: An Informal History of the Underworld." (Lansky Lounge, 104 Norfolk St. For more information, call 748-8735.) ♦ Dec. 3 at 7:30: Mark Morris, Richard Howard, Ben Katchor, Grace Paley, and other local writers and artists offer their favorite New York City poems. Stephin Merritt, the witty front man of the downtown combo Magnetic Fields, will also perform. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. For more information, call 254-9628.) ♦ Dec. 3 at 8: The poet Billy Collins reads from his work. (Gershwin Hotel, 7 E. 27th St. 725-6060.)

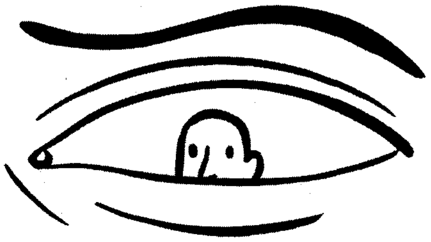
TALKS
Dec. 3 at 7: The filmmaker John Waters talks with the artist Tom Burr about Burr's work, which is on display at the Whitney Museum of American Art. (Madison Ave. at 75th St. 570-3676.) ♦ Dec. 3 at 8: The CBS correspondent Lesley Stahl interviews the journalist and novelist Anna Quindlen. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5500.)

WALK
Nov. 30 at 9:30 A.M.: Shorewalkers offers overeaters a chance to make up for their Thanksgiving indulgences with the Walk Off the Turkey hike. The annual eleven-mile outing runs from South Ferry to the Little Red Lighthouse, beneath the George Washington Bridge. (For more information, call 663-2167 or visit www.shorewalkers.org.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Dealing with the Disabled

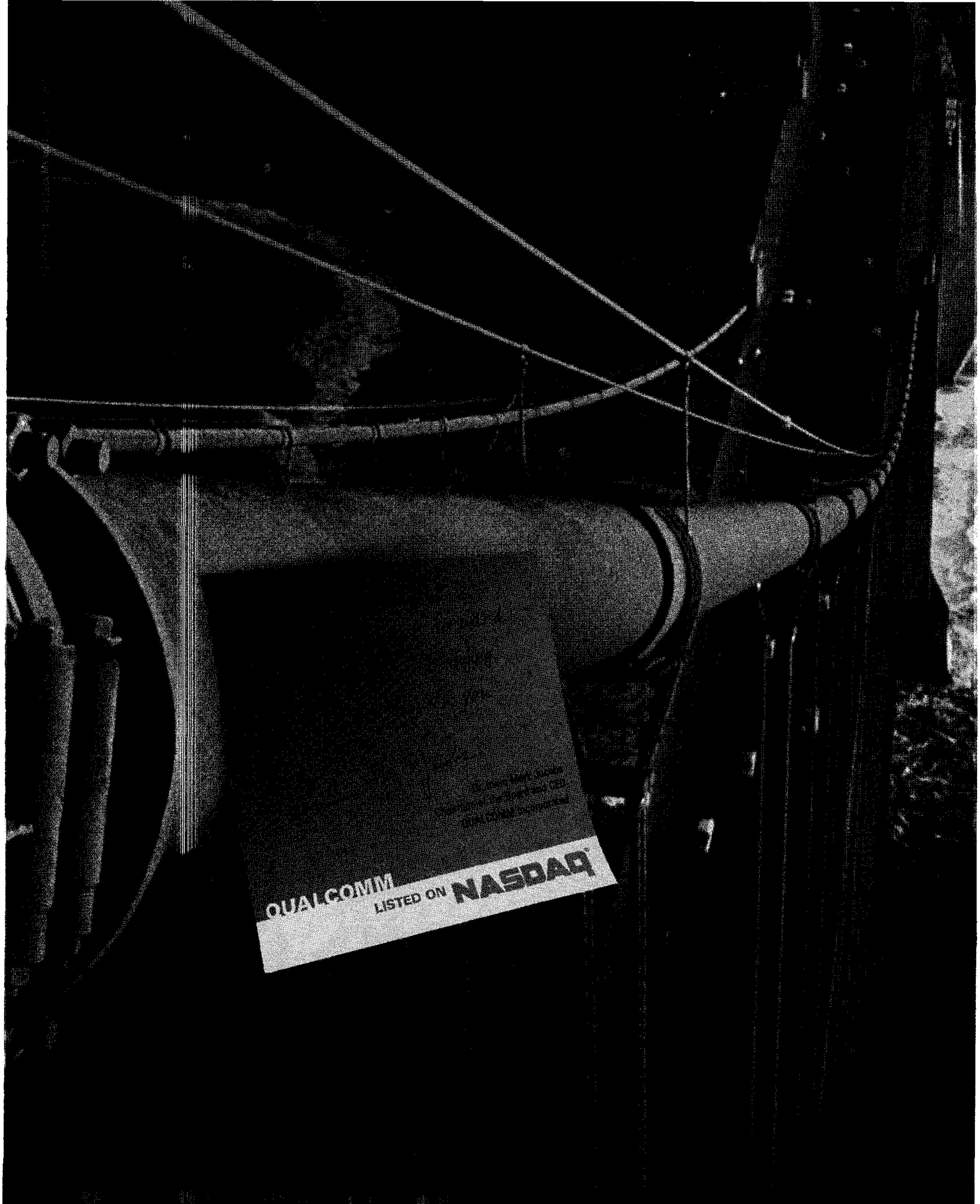
A specific diagnosis of a disability may provide a welcome explanation for puzzling behavior, and even offer relief through medication or therapy. But as Debra Ginsberg explains in **RAISING BLAZE** (HarperCollins), her memoir of bringing up her own "extraordinary" child, a diagnosis can sometimes create more questions than answers. Blaze, who was choked by his own umbilical cord during delivery, expresses himself with enigmatic figurative phrases; loud noises send him screaming around the room. The doctors' assessment was vague to the point of tautology: "pervasive developmental disorder, not otherwise specified." Ginsberg struggles with the public-school system and its rigorous notions of acceptable behavior, where even happiness is monitored: "I am struck again by how difficult it is to navigate a world where we have to be mindful of when laughter is appropriate."



CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

According to Jeanne Safer, in **THE NORMAL ONE** (Free Press), the families of disabled or difficult children also suffer. Inspired by her own troubled relationship with her brother, Safer sees "normal" siblings as suffering from "Caliban syndrome." Her book tries to peek under the sentimental surface of most representations of disability (such as the TV star who told *Us* magazine that her mentally retarded sister was "my love, my heart, my angel"). She writes, "Guilt is rarely absent from the thoughts of healthy adults about their damaged siblings because no amount of devotion or care can make the damaged whole or blot out the dark victory of their own normality." Though some draw away, others become martyrs, feeling inextricably bound to care uncritically for their less able brother or sister. And some, like Safer, reject the sibling, then write a book about it.

—Andrea Thompson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MOVIES OPENING

DEAD OR ALIVE: FINAL
The third film in Takashi Miike's gangster trilogy, with Riki Takeuchi and Sho Aikawa. In Japanese. Opening Nov. 29. (Cinema Village.)

EIGHT CRAZY NIGHTS
Adam Sandler gives voice to three characters—a holiday-hating town bully, an elderly yet sprightly basketball referee, and the referee's twin sister—in this animated musical comedy. Opening Nov. 27.

EXTREME OPS
An action movie in which a group of snowboarders and skiers run afoul of terrorists while filming a commercial in the Alps. Christian Duguay directed. Opening Nov. 27.

RABBIT-PROOF FENCE
Phillip Noyce directed this drama, set in Australia in 1931, based on the true story of three Aboriginal girls who fled a state-run native settlement. With Kenneth Branagh. Opening Nov. 29.

SOLARIS
A doctor (George Clooney) investigates a space station that has cut off all communication with Earth, in a science-fiction drama directed by Steven Soderbergh. With Natascha McElhone and Jeremy Davies. Opening Nov. 27.

THEY
A horror movie, directed by Robert Harmon, in which a group of people suffer from traumatic night terrors. Opening Nov. 27.

TREASURE PLANET
Robert Louis Stevenson's classic adventure tale, retold with an outer-space setting, in an animated movie from Disney. The voice cast includes Emma Thompson and Martin Short. Opening Nov. 27.

FILM NOTES

ARARAT
A complicated, not to say confusing, movie from Atom Egoyan. His subject is the massacre of the Armenians in 1915—a matter of abiding pain and significance to those of Armenian descent, such as the director himself. He approaches the problem from different angles: there is a historical epic film, then the story of how that epic itself was cast and shot, then a delving into the lives of its performers, and so forth. There is even a long, implausible interview between a customs inspector (Christopher Plummer) and a young Armenian (David Alpay) who has just arrived in Canada; as the subplots ramify, we watch the effect of the genocide—as it is unequivocally called by its victims—on lives both close and distant. The trouble is that you can feel the history being used as much as examined; what is required, not least for American audiences, is an unerring clarity, and what they get is a stylish, near-numbing deadpan of mystification. With Bruce Greenwood and Charles Aznavour, who gives every sign of being immortal.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 11/18/02.) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square.)

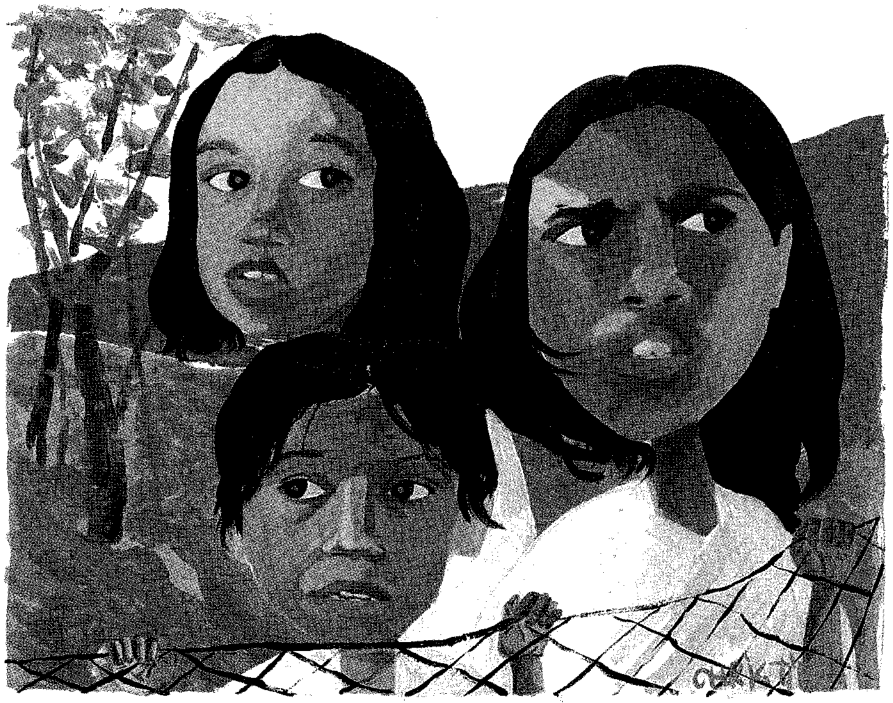
AUTO FOCUS
In the late sixties, Bob Crane (Greg Kinnear), the real-life star of the television series "Hogan's Heroes," links up with a video-technology salesman and hanger-on named John Carpenter (Willem Dafoe). In effect, the two men pimp for each other: Crane, the TV star with the devilish smile, attracts endless girls, some of whom sleep with Carpenter, and Carpenter, taping the proceedings, attracts a few girls with the cameras, too. The men, scoring night after night, engage in what you might call Old Sex—breast-fixated, impersonal, and brief. The director, Paul Schrader, doesn't try to turn us on; the movie is completely lacking in sensuality, full of mirthless fun and bland debauchery. Despite their extraordinary intimacy, the men loathe each other—there's nothing holding them together but unfulfilled homoerotic feelings. Kinnear is good as the smug, shallow Crane, but Dafoe is so creepy that it's hard to imagine anyone speaking, much less sleeping, with him.—*David Denby* (10/28/02) (Battery Park 16, Empire 25, 59th Street East Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kew Gardens Cinema, and Village Theatre VII.)

BEYOND THE VALLEY OF THE DOLLS
Despite the title, this 1970 movie is a rabid anti-sequel to the smash big-screen version of Jacqueline Susann's roman à clef about babes and pills in show biz. Roger Ebert has divulged that when he and King of the Nudies Russ Meyer collaborated on the script, they didn't crack open Susann's novel. They simply reduced the movie to the formula of three naïve women and how they fall. Their new set of gals are members of a rock trio whose omnisexual Hollywood manager, the whiz kid Ronnie (Z-Man) Barzell, quotes Shakespeare and also coins some memorable phrases of his own, such as, "You will drink the black sperm of my vengeance." Ebert says that director Meyer wanted a movie that would "simultaneously be a satire, a serious melodrama, a rock musical, a comedy, a violent exploitation picture, a skin flick, and a moralistic exposé (so soon after the Sharon Tate murders) of what the opening crawl called 'the oft-times nightmarish world of Show Business.' " Well, it is all that, and an amalgam of straight and gay soft-core porn. Ebert and Meyer include parodies of Phil Spector and Muhammad Ali (as a womanizing champ named Randy) that have nothing to do with real people. The result is an apotheosis of bottomless absurdity best experienced late at night with a crowd that alternately laughs and hisses.—*Michael Sragow* (Film Forum; Nov. 27-Dec. 3.)

BOWLING FOR COLUMBINE
Michael Moore's rounded guzzler's belly hangs over his jeans, his shirt is untucked and probably untuckable, and his baseball cap covers a mass of unhealthy hair. He's an American satirist disguised as a loser. In his latest provocation—a documentary mixing stock footage, interviews, gun-dealer advertisements, and the like—he goes after America's gun culture, which he sees as the product of a collective guilt over slavery and the slaughter of Native Americans, a guilt that manifests itself in paranoia and a relentless obsession with security. Moore, as always, is less a reliable or coherent thinker than a left-wing joker with a camera, but some of his mocking sallies have a way of hitting their target.—*D.D.* (10/28/02) (BAM Rose Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, and Sunshine Cinema.)

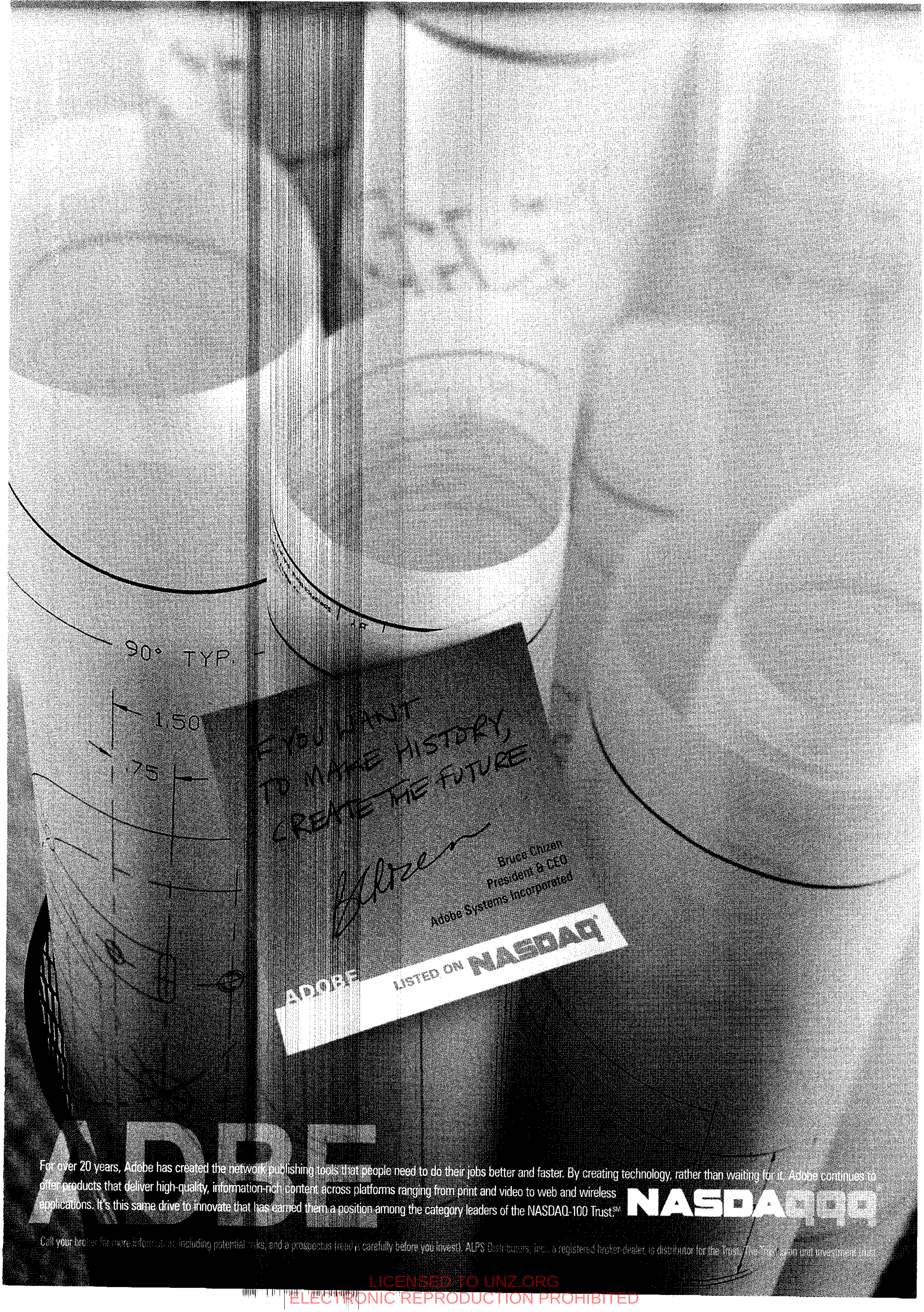
COMEDIAN
Like a perverse child knocking over a sandcastle, Jerry Seinfeld takes apart his fame and tries to build it back up again. After the success of "Seinfeld," he returned to the comedy clubs to do standup, presented in this documentary as entertainment in its purest form: the man, the microphone, the audience. For Seinfeld, it's also a ritual of purification, a chance to rediscover his comic chops, like a boxer reëntering the ring. He even ups the ante by refusing to use his old material. A noble experiment, but a corrupt one, because Seinfeld's name is always out ahead of him, smoothing the way. (The compliments outnumber the punch lines.) The fascinating aspect of this film is its portrait of perfectionism, a curse not even celebrity can cure. By the end, you feel that if Seinfeld were to switch places with the young, unknown comedian he mentors, neither would be happy for more than four minutes.—*Michael Agger* (84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kew Gardens Cinema, The Screening Room, and Sutton 1 and 2.)

EL CRIMEN DEL PADRE AMARO
When the Catholic authorities in Mexico got wind of this movie, which tells of the affair between a young priest and a sixteen-year-old virgin, they threatened to excommunicate its two young stars. Bad move. A curious and aroused public turned out in droves to see exactly how Father Amaro (Gael García Bernal) and Amelia (Ana Claudia Talancón) would go about breaking the Seventh Commandment. To be sure, there's a fair amount of steamy sacrilege, but it's not quite the last tango the trailer would lead you to expect. The director, Carlos Carrera, turns out to be a man of serious intent, portraying the Catholic church as a fallible institution, inextricably linked,



Opening November 29, "Rabbit-Proof Fence," directed by Phillip Noyce.

R. GREGORY CHRISTIE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for better or worse, to all levels of Mexican society. This is shown mostly through the compromised life of an older priest, Father Benito (played, with dignity, by the veteran actor Sancho Gracia), who has a mistress and a cozy relationship with the local drug lord. The story's many strands require a deft touch, and not surprisingly the movie gets away from Carrera; the second half devolves into soap-opera plotting and scenes transparently designed for maximum shock value. In Spanish.—*M.A.* (Angelika Film Center and Eastside Playhouse.)

DIE ANOTHER DAY

James Bond's twentieth cinematic adventure, the fourth with the redoubtable Pierce Brosnan in the lead, gets off to an unsettling start. The pre-credit sequence sees Bond captured by the North Korean military, imprisoned, and tortured. (By the time he's set free, he bears an unfortunate resemblance to John Walker Lindh.) Many believe Bond gave away valuable information under torture, and the movie picks up speed when a revenge-seeking 007 teams up with an American agent nicknamed Jinx (Halle Berry) to clear his name. The usual irresistible Bond-film kicks are on full display, but the teaming of Brosnan and Berry never heats up—he's effortlessly in character, she's all eye candy. Her acting seems very tentative; it helps when she doesn't have to deliver a line. She does, however, have a classic Bond moment—a sexy lifting of her eyebrow before a backward dive off a cliff. The action scenes play well, the high point being a fencing duel between Bond and his nemesis, although a scene with Bond surfing an ice-strewn tsunami is a regrettable bust. Lee Tamahori keeps the film's style squarely in the range of past, personality-free Bond epics. Perhaps the most that can be said of this entertainment—in the innuendo-drenched parlance of the franchise—is that it's well tooled.—*Bruce Diones* (Astor Plaza, Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

Mr. Fotheringham

George Clooney in Steven Soderbergh's "Solaris."

EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM

8 MILE

In Eminem's first movie, the white rap star plays a barely disguised version of his pre-celebrity self: Jimmy Smith, Jr., a wounded young man who lives in a trailer in inner-city Detroit with his slatternly mother (Kim Basinger). During jousts at a local club, Jimmy goes up against the best black rappers and fights for the respect of the black audience. These improvised raps are his only release, a spasmodic assertion of self. Curtis Hanson, working from a script by Scott Silver, lays out the narrative and the character relationships methodically, even slowly. The movie may be a shrewdly engineered piece of proletarian pop in the tradition of "Rocky" and "Saturday Night Fever," but Eminem's vile candor gives it a convincingly gritty tone, and the great Mexican cinematographer Rodrigo Prieto ("Amores Perros") keeps the visual palette ugly and raw. With Mekhi Phifer as a local rap impresario and Brittany Murphy as a bright-eyed little mover who takes to Jimmy.—*D.D.* (11/11/02) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Twin, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

EVERGREEN

In the thirties, the English Jessie Matthews, with her big, rabbity smile, her satin pajamas, and her famous long-legged high kicks, was the closest female equivalent to Fred Astaire. Musical-comedy lovers used to dream of a pairing of the two, but, except for Ginger, he was likely to be stuck dragging girls like Joan Leslie through their paces, while Jessie Matthews stayed in England and had to carry her movies by solos, or by comic turns with Sonnie Hale. Here (with Hale) she dances exquisitely in a classic 1935 British musical—i.e., it's charming but a little extended, and less snappy, noisy, and brash than American musicals of the same period. The songs, including "Over My Shoulder Goes One Care" and "Dancing on the Ceiling," are by Rodgers and Hart and Harry M. Woods.—*Pauline Kael* (Gramercy Theatre; Nov. 29-30.)

FAR FROM HEAVEN

An immaculate new movie from Todd Haynes, the purveyor of "Safe" and "Velvet Goldmine." This project teams him once again with Julianne Moore, who looks set to become the Catherine Deneuve to Haynes's Buñuel. Here she plays—or incarnates, to the last inch of her hemline—a wife and mother, living in Hartford in 1957. All is well, if brittle, until she drops by to see her husband (Dennis Quaid) in his office after hours, and finds him entwined with a man. From here on, their lives start to shred and scatter; she herself falls for the gardener (Dennis Haysbert), who is not only black but, to all appearances, perfect. With tact and care, the movie digs into all the subjects that lay concealed below the surface when Max Ophüls and Douglas Sirk were filming their own melodramas in the nineteen-fifties. As an exercise in style, it cannot be faulted, and Moore takes us by surprise, even by storm, with the wealth and fullness of her feeling; yet there remains something prim in the whole endeavor—we know better than these beleaguered people did, and the movie can hardly help congratulating us, and itself, on that knowledge.—*A.L.* (11/18/02) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Kew Gardens Cinema, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and 72nd Street East.)

FEMME FATALE

Brain De Palma is just diddling in this elegant but nonsensical erotic thriller set in Paris. The movie doesn't hang together in any way that matters, and most of it has the sleek, empty look of high-schlock Euro fashion ads. But many will be ravished by an early sequence, set at the opening of the Cannes Film Festival, in which a naughty girl posing as a photographer (Rebecca Romijn-Stamos), seduces a model dressed only in diamonds arranged on her body in snake patterns. With Antonio Banderas in a casual performance as a happy-go-lucky photographer.—*D.D.* (11/25/02) (Battery Park 16, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

FRIDA

At the center of Julie Taymor's vibrant bio-pic is the relationship (always described as "tempestuous") between the great Mexican muralist Diego Rivera (Alfred Molina) and the talented painter Frida Kahlo (Salma Hayek). After an hour or so of this Punch-and-Judy show, with its noisy drinking, hurling of kitchen items, partings, and reconciliations, you may want to knock both lovers flat with an enormous chili pepper. Yet "Frida" is much better than it has any right to be. The movie has a rambunctious spirit and a liberated sense of color—an appreciation of the raw, strong Mexican folk tradition that gave both artists their special juice. Taymor and a gaggle of screenwriters are much too shrewd to accept the sentimental feminist view that Frida was Diego Rivera's victim. Smart, willful, and perverse, this Frida is nobody's servant, and the tiny Hayek plays her with head held high.—*D.D.* (11/11/02) (Angelika Film Center, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, and 19th Street East 6.)

HARRY POTTER AND THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS

Two down, presumably five to go, and already the franchise is entering dangerous territory: if you aren't one of the many who know their Harry Potter chapter and verse, prepare for a nap. Like its predecessor, the movie is overlong and devoutly faithful to the book: the director Chris Columbus does everything but film J. K. Rowling's semicolons. Most of the original cast returns—a good thing—but so do many of the limp visual ideas. Kenneth Branagh, in a hammy role, makes for a welcome addition to the Hogwarts faculty, and it would have been fun to see him mix it up more with Alan Rickman. But all of the what-ifs matter little, as Columbus's film won't disappoint an eager audience that often calls out Harry's next move before it happens.—*M.A.* (Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

PUNCH-DRUNK LOVE

Paul Thomas Anderson's whimsical romantic comedy is a bit like an amusement-park ride that builds tremendous forward momentum and then suddenly juts to the side. Even those of us who enjoy perversity in movies may be put off by its skittering, against-the-beat rhythms. Adam Sandler plays Barry Egan, a frightened fellow in a bright-blue suit, a nerd who sells merchandise out of a San Fernando Valley warehouse and stammers his way through the simplest encounters. At dawn, a harmonium is dropped from a truck outside the warehouse; a bit later, a lovely woman (Emily Watson) inexplicably falls in love with Barry as the music track offers drumbeats in arbitrary counterpoint to the imagery—in fact, everything that happens is arbitrary, and the characters are mysterious without becoming interesting. Anderson wants to say something quirky and powerful about love and the miraculousness of ordinary lives, but his world neither intersects with ours at any point nor hangs together as an independent magical creation. There are touches out of Harold Lloyd's and Jacques Tati's comedies and old Hollywood musicals, but just touches.—*D.D.* (BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 85th Street, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 64th and 2nd, and Union Square.)

THE QUIET AMERICAN

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Cinema 2, Empire 25, and Village Theatre VII.)

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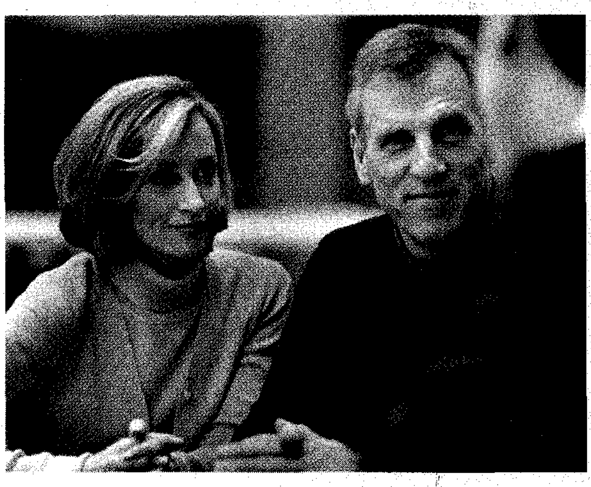

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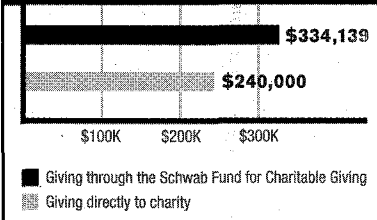

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THE RING
Gore Verbinski's film, a retelling of the hit 1998 Japanese thriller, is a cold, arty exercise in scary moviemaking. Naomi Watts, in a strong performance, stars as a newspaper reporter who discovers a videotape that promises death to the viewer a week after it's seen. The movie's nifty beginning—all anxiety and dread—suggests that the audience is in for a fearful ride, but the one-dimensional story quickly runs out of fuel. Verbinski desaturates the film's colors (muddy browns and jaundiced yellows) in a vague attempt at atmosphere. Although he manages to pull off a few spectacular fright moments, the tension never really kicks in.—*B.D.* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Twin, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

ROGER DODGER
A smart and sulfurous début from the writer and director Dylan Kidd. Campbell Scott stars as Roger, whose career is in advertising but whose raison d'être is the untiring pursuit of sex. (Almost no love is made in the film, yet the craving for it fills every frame.) Having been jilted by his lover (Isabella Rossellini), who also happens to be his boss, Roger goes hunting by night, in the company of his callow nephew (Jesse Eisenberg) from Ohio. The twist is simple enough: the older man has much to teach but even more to learn. Being Roger, however, he refuses to improve, and it's the bullish, unsentimental drive of the movie that insures its comic kick. The supporting cast, including Jennifer Beals and Elizabeth Berkley, plays nicely off the central monster, but this is Scott's movie all the way. He is rarely off camera, but he does not abuse that privilege; there is restraint, and far more wit than you'd expect, in his dazzling depiction of a rampage.—*A.L.* (11/4/02) (Empire 25, Lincoln Square, and Sunshine Cinema.)

THE SANTA CLAUSE 2
The comic Tim Allen dons his Santa suit again in this follow-up to the 1994 Disney smash. The story has Allen reading the fine print of his Santa contract and discovering that he needs to find a wife; he also needs to deal with his son, from a previous marriage, who's been put on the naughty list. The sitcom director Michael Lembeck keeps the lightweight scenes short, and there's something almost quaint in his use of animatronic reindeer. The film is pretty in a Christmas-card way, and just as benign.—*B.D.* (Battery Park 16, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, 34th Street Theatre, Union Square, Village East Cinemas, and Ziegfeld.)

STANDING IN THE SHADOWS OF MOTOWN
The tambourine has never been used to greater effect than in the Motown singles of the sixties, and this documentary about the musicians who played on those tracks is a beautiful tribute to the exquisite finesse of the Motown sound. The director Paul Justman interviews close to a dozen of the Hitsville U.S.A. house band, loosely known as the Funk Brothers, and their anecdotes and repartee are very sharp, very funny. When these old-timers sit around and begin, piece by piece, to play "Ain't Too Proud to Beg," the result is incandescent—and so is the film.—*B.D.* (Angelika Film Center, Empire 25, and 62nd & Broadway.)

TALK TO HER
In Pedro Almodóvar's odd but touching romantic drama, two very different men are drawn together by a common task: taking care of women who have fallen into a coma. Benigno (Javier Cámara), a shy, seemingly asexual young male nurse, looks after Alicia (Leonor Watling), a beautiful ballet dancer. Marco (Darío Grandinetti), a fortyish Argentine writer, becomes the lover of a fierce, long-waisted female bullfighter (Rosario Flores). After she is gored in the ring, she never speaks again. Both love affairs are touched by fantasy. Almodóvar's point appears to be that you can't have love without fable—that every love affair is an improbable narrative wrung from non-being and loneliness. The movie is shot in a new, subdued style for the director: past and present flow together, and everything seems touched with a melancholy magic. Two ballets by the choreographer Pina Bausch are integral to the film's themes. In Spanish.—*D.D.* (11/25/02) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

THE TRUTH ABOUT CHARLIE
Why remake "Charade"? Stanley Donen's movie is known and loved for its pairing of Cary Grant and Audrey Hepburn. Jonathan Demme has kept tightly to the story, although you could argue that it was only the stars who made the story worth considering in the first place. We are still in Paris, but this time we get Mark Wahlberg and Thandie Newton; she plays the young widow, and he is the mysterious friend, or agent, who apparently comes to her aid. Newton has no problems with the stylish panic of the role, but Wahlberg seems ominously out of his depth; however many berets you clap on his head, he still looks like a man who would rather be on the planet of the apes. Fortunately, the surrounding landscape has its pleasures; Demme's manner is looser and funkier than Donen's, and the Paris we see is a jamboree of teeming streets and suspicious citizens, hopped up on a soundtrack of world music. The film is hilariously indifferent to the conundrum of the plot—the solution may even be found on the poster, for those who care—but it is sustained, just about, by the buoyancy of its mood. With Tim Robbins as a villain on a Ferris wheel (shades of Harry Lime), and the alluring Christine Boisson as a cop.—*A.L.* (11/4/02) (Battery Park 16, Beekman, and Village Theatre VII.)

ALSO PLAYING

8 WOMEN (9/16/02)
Empire 25 and The Screening Room.

THE EMPEROR'S CLUB
Battery Park 16, Beekman, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Village Theatre VII.

MOSTLY MARTHA
Cinema Village and Sutton 1 and 2.

PERSONAL VELOCITY
Angelika Film Center and First & 62nd Cinemas.

THE TRIALS OF HENRY KISSINGER (10/7/02)
Film Forum.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kew Gardens Cinema, 81-05 Lefferts Blvd., Queens (718-441-9835).
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Twin, Broadway at 99th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 139-143 E. Houston St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through Dec. 29: A Martin Scorsese retrospective. Nov. 30 at 2: "The King of Comedy" (1983). ♦ Nov. 30 at 4: "After Hours" (1985). ♦ Dec. 1 at 2: "The Color of Money" (1986). ♦ Dec. 1 at 4:15: "Cape Fear" (1991). ♦ Repertory nights. Nov. 30 and Dec. 1 at 6:30: "L'Éclisse" (1962, Michelangelo Antonioni; in French and Italian).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5181)—Nov. 29-Dec. 1: Screenings of the English New Wave film "Another Sky" (1954, Gavin Lambert).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—Through Nov. 30: "From Hanoi to Hollywood: The Vietnam War on Film." Nov. 27 at 5 and 8: "Born on the Fourth of July" (1989, Oliver Stone). ♦ Nov. 28 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10 and Nov. 29 at 2, 4:30, and 7: "Hair" (1979, Milos Forman). ♦ Nov. 30 at 3:20 and 7:15: "Apocalypse Now Redux" (1979/2001, Francis Ford Coppola). ♦ Dec. 1-3: "The Nearest Far Away Place: Avant-Garde New York," a series of experimental films, curated by Mark McElhatten.

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Nov. 27-Dec. 3 at 1, 3:10, 5:20, 7:30, and 9:40: "Beyond the Valley of the Dolls" (†).

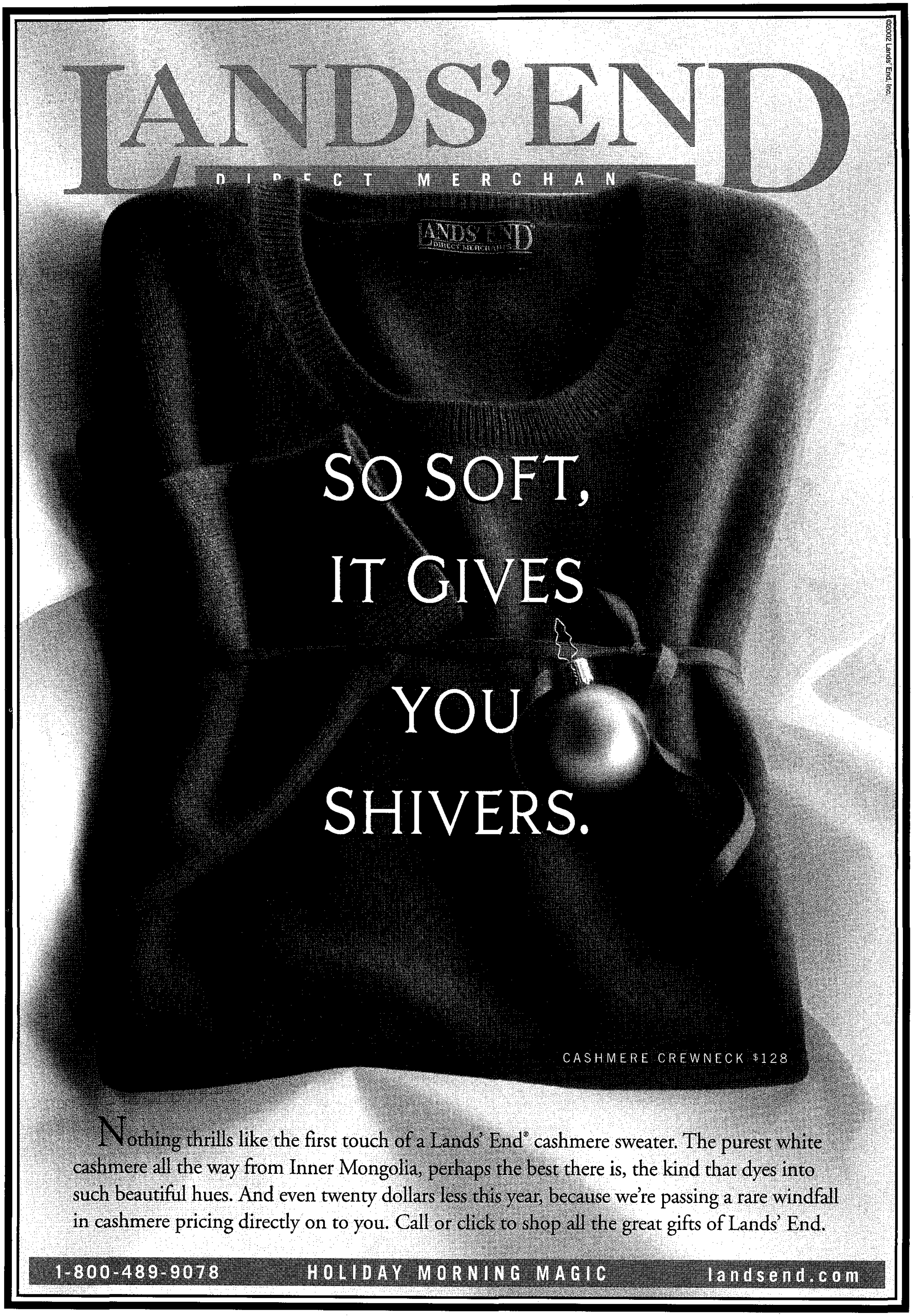
FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Neo-noir films. Dec. 3 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "The Marcorelle Affair" (2000, Serge Le Peron; in French).

GRAMERCY THEATRE
127 E. 23rd St. (777-4900)—Through Dec. 2: A centennial celebration of the composer Richard Rodgers. Nov. 29 at 2: "State Fair" (1945, Walter Lang). ♦ Nov. 29 at 4:15: "Heavenly Creatures" (1994, Peter Jackson). ♦ Nov. 29 at 6:30 and Nov. 30 at 1: "Evergreen" (†). ♦ Nov. 29 at 8:30: "Hallelujah, I'm a Bum" (1933, Lewis Milestone). ♦ Nov. 30 at 3: "Dancer in the Dark" (2000, Lars Von Trier). ♦ Nov. 30 at 6: "Shall We Dance?" (1996, Masayuki Suo; in Japanese). ♦ Nov. 30 at 8:30 and Dec. 1 at 1: "Welcome to the Woop Woop" (1998, Stephan Elliot). ♦ Dec. 1 at 3:15: "Mississippi" (1935, A. Edward Sutherland). ♦ Dec. 2 at 2: "Richard Rodgers: The Sweetest Sounds" (2001, Roger Sherman). ♦ Restored prints from Paramount. Dec. 1 at 5 and Dec. 2 at 8:30: "Roman Holiday" (1954, William Wyler). ♦ Dec. 1 at 7:15 and Dec. 2 at 6: "Sunset Boulevard" (1950, Billy Wilder). ♦ Special screening. Dec. 2 at 4:15: "The Faithful Heart" (1923, Jean Epstein).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
139-143 E. Houston St. (358-0573)—Midnight movies. Nov. 27-30: "The Evil Dead" (1982, Sam Raimi).

THALIA THEATRE
2537 Broadway, at 95th St. (864-5400)—Recent cinema from Brazil. All films are in Portuguese. Nov. 30 and Dec. 1 at 2:30: "Tainah: An Amazon Adventure" (2000, Tânia Lamarca and Sérgio Bloch). ♦ Nov. 30 at 4:15 and Dec. 1 at 6: "The Dog's Will" (2000, Guel Arraes). ♦ Nov. 30 at 7: "Amélia" (2000, Ana Carolina). ♦ Nov. 30 at 9:15 and Dec. 1 at 8: "Possible Loves" (2000, Sandra Werneck). ♦ Dec. 1 at 4:15: "Samba" (2001, Thereza Jessoroum).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Two by Andrei Tarkovsky. Nov. 28 at 1, 4, and 7: "The Sacrifice" (1986; in English and Swedish). ♦ Nov. 29 at noon, 4, and 8 and Nov. 30 at 12:30: "Andrei Rublev" (1969; in Russian and Italian). ♦ Special screening. Nov. 30 at 4:30, 6:45, and 9 and Dec. 1 at 2, 4:15, and 9: "Blue Wild Angel: Jimi Hendrix Live at the Isle of Wight" (2001, Murray Lerner). ♦ Première screening. Dec. 1 at 6:30: "Blackboards" (2001, Samira Makhmalbaf; in Farsi).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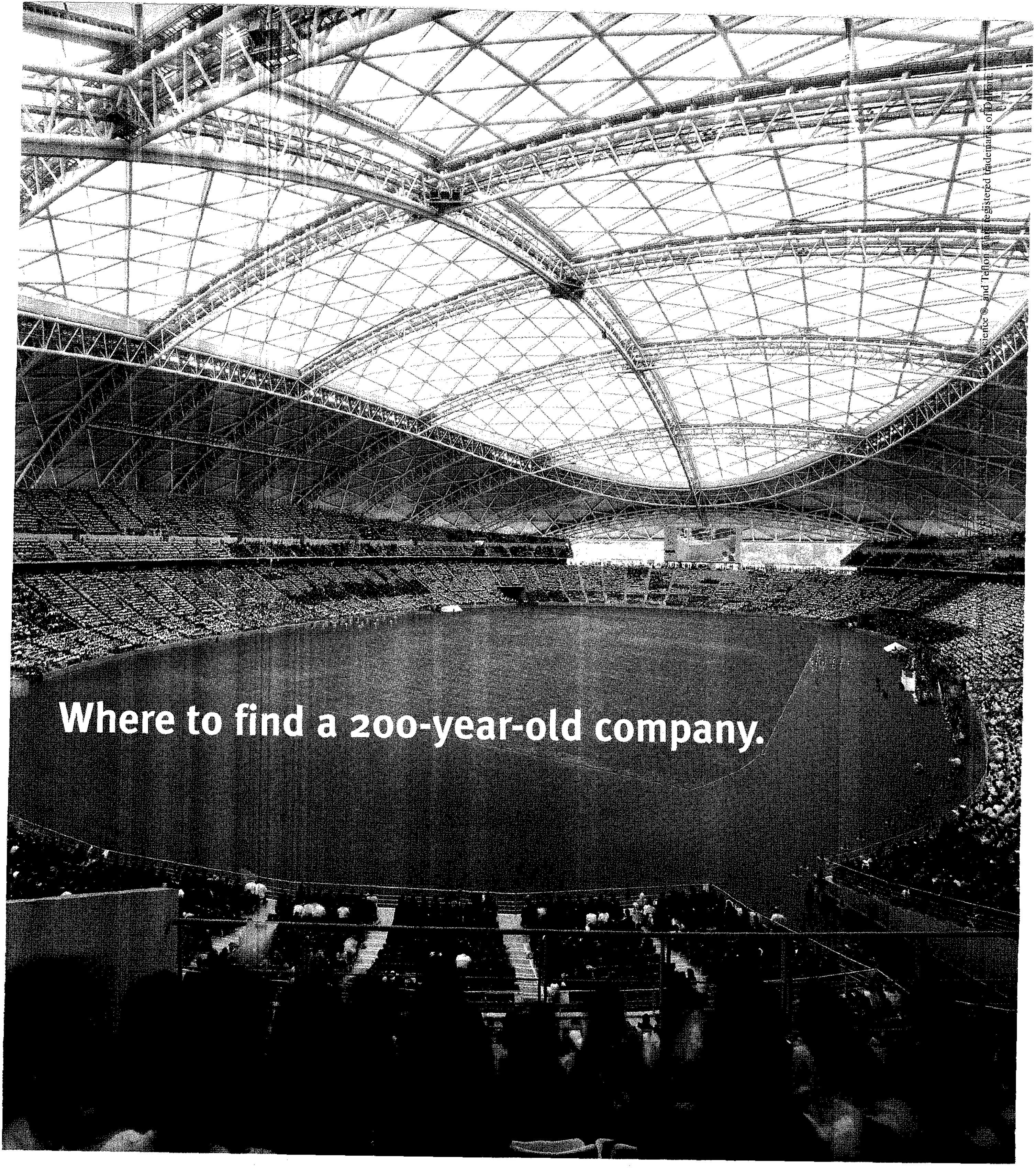
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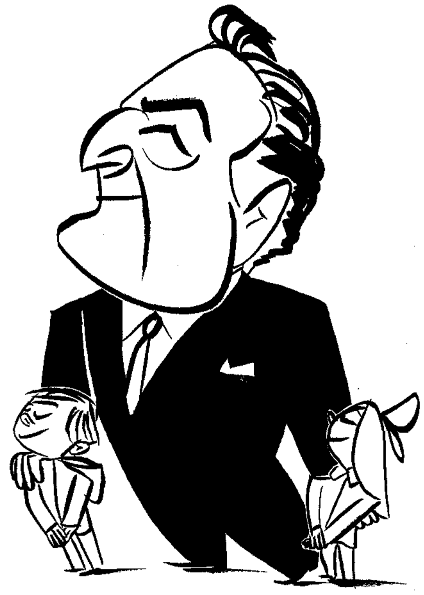
COMMENT

TALES OUT OF PRESCHOOL

The scandal at the 92nd Street Y Nursery School—an institution that anxious plutocratic parents in New York City believe will facilitate their progeny's acceptance to Harvard and teach toddler barons social-climbing skills when they have barely learned to walk—is a reminder of how far a C.E.O. will go to keep a valued employee happy. Jack Grubman, formerly a top analyst at Salomon Smith Barney, the investment-banking division of Citigroup, and the father of young twins, sought the help of Sanford Weill, Citigroup's chief executive, in placing his children at the Y. Grubman later described a satisfying transaction in an e-mail to a friend: he had raised his rating of stock in A.T. & T., a potential Citigroup client, as a favor to Weill, and the Grubman twins appeared on the preschool's rolls. Citigroup, in the meantime, pledged to donate a million dollars to the Y. Now Grubman denies that there were any quid pro quos, saying that he invented the story to show off. Weill says that he never tried to influence Grubman, and that the donation to the Y was part of the company's philanthropic program. Weill does acknowledge that he put in a word with the school in support of the academic aspirations of the Grubman siblings, saying of their father, "He was an important employee who asked for my help."

The preschool-age children of the twenty-five thousand five hundred Citigroup employees in New York City who aren't as important as Jack Grubman have to make do with rather less in the way of child-care opportunities. The company maintains two child-care centers, one in midtown and one in Tribeca, and shares a third in the Financial District. They are all amply equipped with building blocks and art supplies and computers, and are staffed by qualified teachers—in short, they are the kind of facility in which most parents would be thrilled to place their children, even if they didn't get to share a dramatic-play area with Woody Allen's kids. Unfortunately, the centers are available to employees only in emergencies—when a babysitter is sick, or when schools are closed on those national holidays which go unobserved by Citigroup. Employees can leave their children at a center up to twenty times a year. (Special provision can be made for, say, a mother just returning from maternity leave who needs to be nearby for nursing, or an employee who is left in the lurch for a couple of weeks by a nanny handing in her notice.) Most employees with children use the centers between six and eight times a year—a testament to the scope and efficiency of the primary child-care arrangements that parents make on their own.



Sanford Weill

As it happens, Sanford Weill himself has a long-standing interest in the impact of child care upon the success of a business: in 1988, he was the chairman of an advisory committee in Maryland which studied how to attract businesses by offering improved child care for employees. And Citigroup has been praised by children's advocates: in 2001, the Children's Defense Fund issued a report that cited the company for having taken the lead in improving and expanding the supply of child care nationwide. (Outside New York, the company has five full-time child-care centers for its employees.) The child-care centers used by Citigroup in New York are run by a private, for-profit company named ChildrenFirst (which supplies the same service to the parent company of this magazine). It might be just as accurate, though, to characterize

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

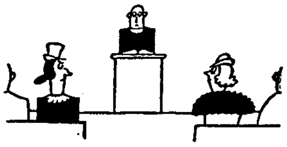
the centers as CitigroupFirst, since backup child care is one of those benefits which serve the employer at least as much as the employee: offering a safe place to park children temporarily is a great way for a corporation to insure that it doesn't lose a day's work from a parent who might otherwise stay at home doing finger painting. Backup child care is a fast-growing segment of the thirty-billion-dollar child-care industry, which is no surprise, since it is the kind of parent-friendly policy a company can introduce without having to contemplate anything quite so parent-friendly as full-time child care.

In the United States, of course, it's not hard for a corporation to look generous in providing child care, since state and federal child-care services are so inadequate. In "The Price of Motherhood," published last year, Ann Crittenden reported that although half of all three-to-five-year-olds of working mothers in this country attend some sort of paid day care, no state requires its day-care centers to be accredited. Crittenden figured that it would cost more than fifty billion dollars to provide a national program for preschoolers. That's a lot of money, but France manages to provide something comparable, with ninety-nine per cent of French children enrolled in preschools that are either free or available at a nominal charge.

The provision of decent universal preschool education may seem like a pipe dream, but a study released last week by the National Institute for Early Education Research points out the economic benefits of providing high-quality, year-round, full-time programs. The report argues that whatever such programs cost is money well spent in terms of children's welfare: mothers are able to earn significantly more over their lifetimes, thus raising their children's standard of living; and children benefit from being taught by qualified professionals. "Such programs pay for themselves, and then some," Leonard Masse, a co-author of the report, says. They might even have another effect, one that Sanford Weill and his peers would surely applaud: busy C.E.O.s would be spared not only the trouble of making lobbying phone calls to fancy private schools but also the embarrassment, not to mention the litigation, that ensues when those unedifying efforts are exposed.

—*Rebecca Mead*

THE BENCH
A PROSECUTOR SPEAKS UP

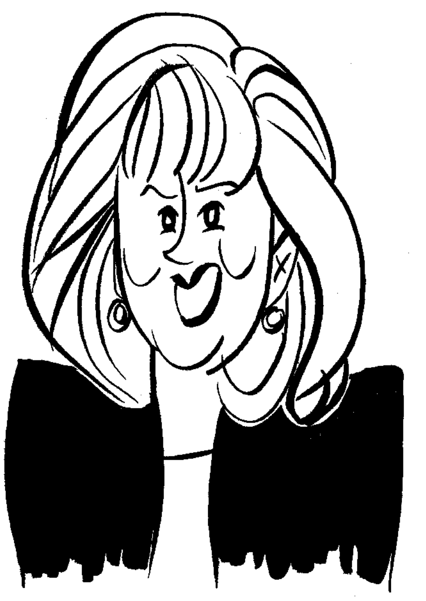


The case of the Central Park jogger, a young investment banker who was raped and nearly beaten to death on April 19, 1989, stood for years as a symbol of urban predatory violence. In the days immediately after the crime, five teen-agers admitted to police that they had assaulted the woman; they later pleaded not guilty, but they were all convicted and sentenced to prison terms ranging from five to fifteen years. Then, earlier this year, a man named Matias Reyes, who was serving a long prison sentence in another rape case, came forward and said that he alone had raped the jogger. Reyes's DNA matched semen that was found on the jogger and had never been tied to any suspect. The five men convicted in the case, who have all completed their sentences, recently sued to clear their names. In many quarters, the jogger case has now become a different type of cautionary tale—a symbol of the manipulation of young suspects, the risks of false confessions, and the costs of excessive investigative zeal.

Reyes's confession provoked a round of indignant demonstrations, earnest editorials, and some soul-searching within the criminal-justice establishment. But one person who has not been heard from is Linda Fairstein, the prosecutor who led the sex-crimes unit of the Manhattan district attorney's office at the time of the jogger case. In February, Fairstein left the D.A.'s office after thirty years of service, during which she prosecuted such cases as the preppie murder, against Robert Chambers, and earned a reputation as a fierce advocate for victims. Despite her long career in government, no one ever mistook Fairstein for a dull bureaucrat. She wore flashy clothes, socialized with the city's wealthy and powerful, and developed a profitable sideline as the author of best-selling legal thrillers. Her fifth novel will be published in January.

"It's completely dishonest not to mention the context of the rest of the night of the attacks," Fairstein said last week, in her first public discussion of the new developments in the case. "There were at least four other people attacked in the Park that night. Lots of stuff going on." On the day after the assaults, Fairstein went to the Twentieth Precinct, on the Upper West Side, where detectives and her colleague Elizabeth Lederer were interrogating suspects. "I was there to be the eight-hundred-pound gorilla, to help Elizabeth and the cops get the resources they needed. It became clear as I watched and listened to these kids that a few of them knew each other, but most of them hadn't seen each other before," Fairstein recalled. They interviewed dozens of potential suspects. "Twenty to thirty of them were never charged with anything," she said.

At first, the detectives didn't have much to go on. "A kid would say something like 'a dark-skinned guy who lives on 102nd Street,' " Fairstein said. "And these detectives would go out and find him. I think it was one of the most brilliant police investigations I've ever seen." As for the interrogations themselves, Fairstein has no regrets. "We had to use special 'youth rooms,' " she said. "It was a much more friendly atmosphere, not the bare interrogation rooms. Nobody under sixteen was talked to until a parent or guardian arrived. Every kid was in an open space, no handcuffs. This was not an Alabama jail where two guys who have been partners for years put a guy in a back room and he doesn't see the light



Linda Fairstein

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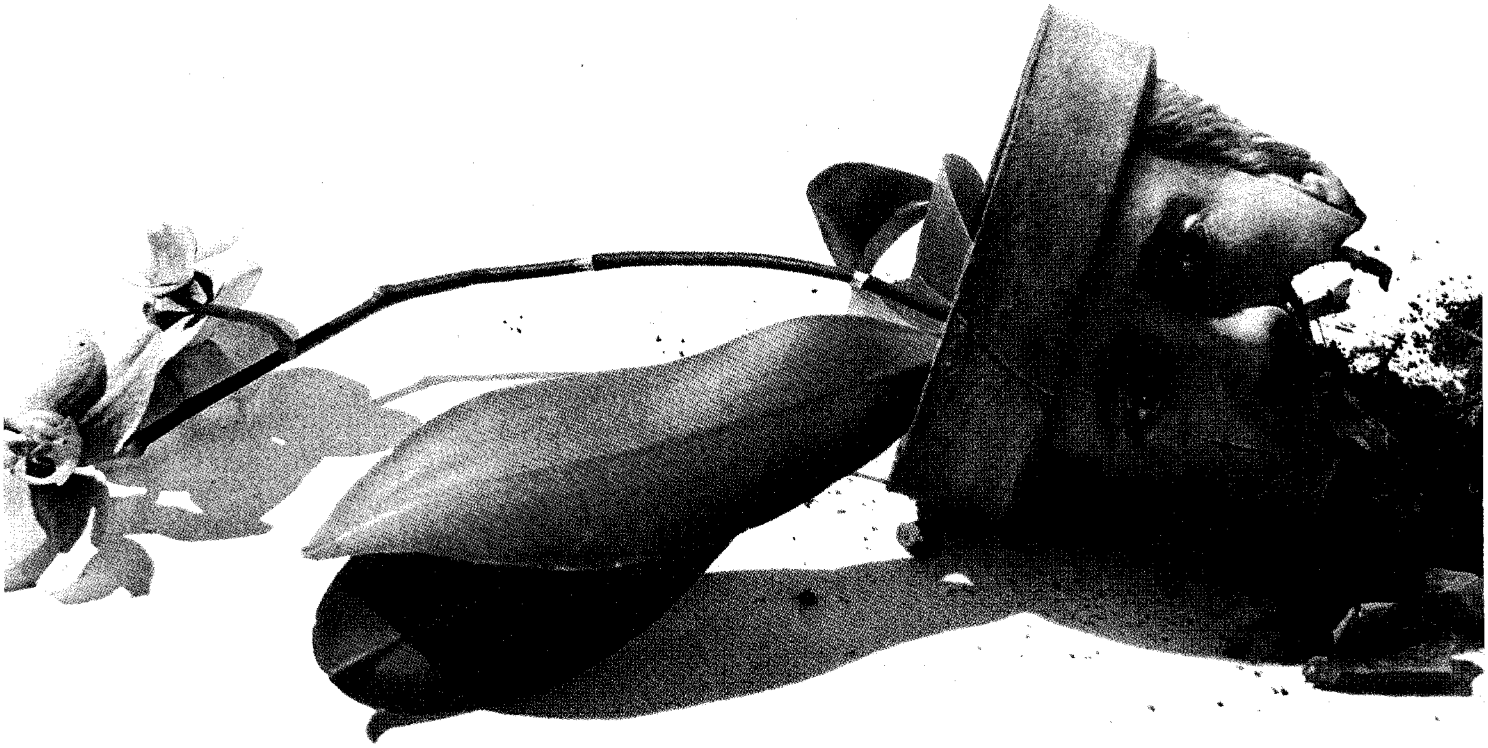

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of day for three days. Three of the five went home and had a night's sleep before they were ever taken into custody. For most of them, the substance of their admissions came out within about an hour of the time they came in. The consistency from their original admissions to the police, to their written statements, to the final video is really remarkable."

But what, then, of Reyes's confession and the DNA results? Why wasn't he caught at the time? Fairstein said, "God knows I wish we had databanks of DNA that long ago, because we would have connected him." She continued, "I think Reyes ran with that pack of kids. He stayed longer when the others moved on. He completed the assault. I don't think there is a question in the minds of anyone present during the interrogation process that these five men were participants, not only in the other attacks that night but in the attack on the jogger. I watched more than thirty detectives—black, white, Hispanic guys who'd never met each other before—conduct a brilliant investigation. Remember, I had a lot of cases with comatose victims. They wake up, more often than not. What's the likelihood that a sophisticated group of cops and prosecutors are going to make up a story that she can refute when she wakes up?" (The jogger recovered from her injuries, for the most part, but never remembered anything about the attack.)

Lawyers for the five defendants contest virtually every aspect of Fairstein's interpretation and feel that the convictions have become indefensible. "Reyes is very clear about what he did. His profile is that of a solo artist, and he acted alone," Michael Warren, who represents three of the defendants, said. "Our position is that they were not involved in any assaults in the Park that night. Nobody who was assaulted could identify any of these young boys at the time." Warren disputes Fairstein's characterization of the interrogations. He said, "During the crucial period—the first hours, when they were first caught—my clients were not in the presence of their parents or guardians." Both Robert Morgenthau, the Manhattan district attorney, and the N.Y.P.D. are conducting internal reviews of the case to determine how to respond to the defendants' efforts to clear their names—and, in time, recover damages for their years in prison.

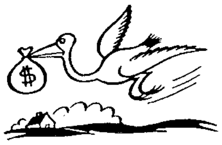
Fairstein stands ready to testify, as she did in the first trial, more than a decade ago. "The defense hasn't come up with anything to exonerate them from the rest of the attacks that night," she said. "Because of the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, they say they had nothing to do with anything that went on in the Park that night. You have to look at their statements in light of all the other evidence in the case." Fairstein understands that their convictions may have to be vacated, but she is adamant that such a finding shouldn't be taken as proof of their innocence.

Fairstein says that she treated this case like all her others. "I am probably responsible for exonerating more people falsely accused of rape than any fifty prosecutors in the country," she said. "We all did here what we did every day. We were there to find out who did it."

—*Jeffrey Toobin*

WINDFALLS

A HUNDRED MILLION



Last week's news that Ruth Lilly, the eighty-seven-year-old heir to the Eli Lilly pharmaceutical fortune, had bequeathed a hundred million dollars to the magazine *Poetry*, a modest Chicago monthly, was greeted by a range of reactions (glee, befuddlement, envy, disdain) that had in common one underlying article of belief: that it was a hell of a lot of money. Certainly, to most poets (excluding a few popular songwriters and a boxer or two) any sum with eight zeros in it is otherworldly, Ozymandian. The poet Kurt Brown said last week that every poet he had talked to had paused before speaking the number. "People just love to say that figure: one hundred million dollars," he said (employing a brief caesura himself). "I was talking to Barry Lopez last night, and he said, 'That's probably more money than poetry has gotten, in total, since Homer.' "

Poetry is highly esteemed. In its ninety years of existence, it has published T. S. Eliot, Wallace Stevens, and Marianne Moore, among many others, and it remains one of the best venues for verse in the land. But it has just four employees. Its offices occupy six hundred square feet. Its annual budget is only six hundred thousand dollars. It pays contributors two dollars a line, which adds up to twenty-eight dollars for a sonnet, as the *Times* pointed out (or, as the *Times* did not point out, ten bucks for a limerick). In other words, *Poetry* is not built to squander that kind of money, and so it will need to reinvent itself, or, at the very least, expand its field of operations. Fellowships, writers' colonies, big awards, educational programs: these might eat up a few million. But what about the rest of it? "They could get very slick," the poet James Tate said. "Beautiful covers, beautiful offices, new hairdos for everyone." The mind reels: you could buy ten thousand acres in, say, northern Michigan, and let a bunch of poets run wild—a Bohemian Grove for real bohemians. You could build poetry ships, poetry stadiums, a poetry police force. You could raise an army of poets, equipped with the best weaponry. You could do all of this, and still have enough left over to give poets their very own tax cut.

There are other things, though, that you can do with a hundred million dollars which suggest that perhaps it's not so much after all. A hundred million will get you a mere fifteen per cent of the Boston Red Sox, six seasons of Allan Houston, a dozen or so episodes of "Friends," a half of an F-22 Raptor jet. United Airlines loses a hundred million dollars every two weeks, and the shareholders of General Electric lose twenty-five times that much whenever the stock drops by a quarter point.

The sense of wonderment, then, that greeted Miss Lilly's bequest betrays what you might call a patronizing view of poetry, best reflected in a comment made around here last week by a writer who happens to be no enemy of verse. "It's like leaving a hundred million dollars to your cat," he said. Everyone finds it amazing that profligacy and poetry would run together, even though profligacy runs through just about everything else. "Why not poetry?" Tate asked.

Brown had an answer. "The big money usually goes to ballet, theatre, the visual arts. They own buildings, plants, earth, and ground, and poetry doesn't. My

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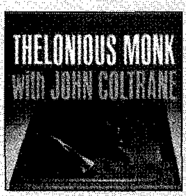
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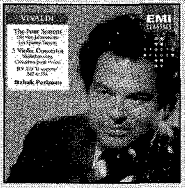
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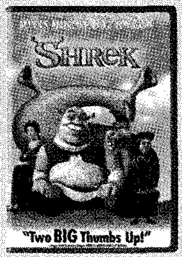
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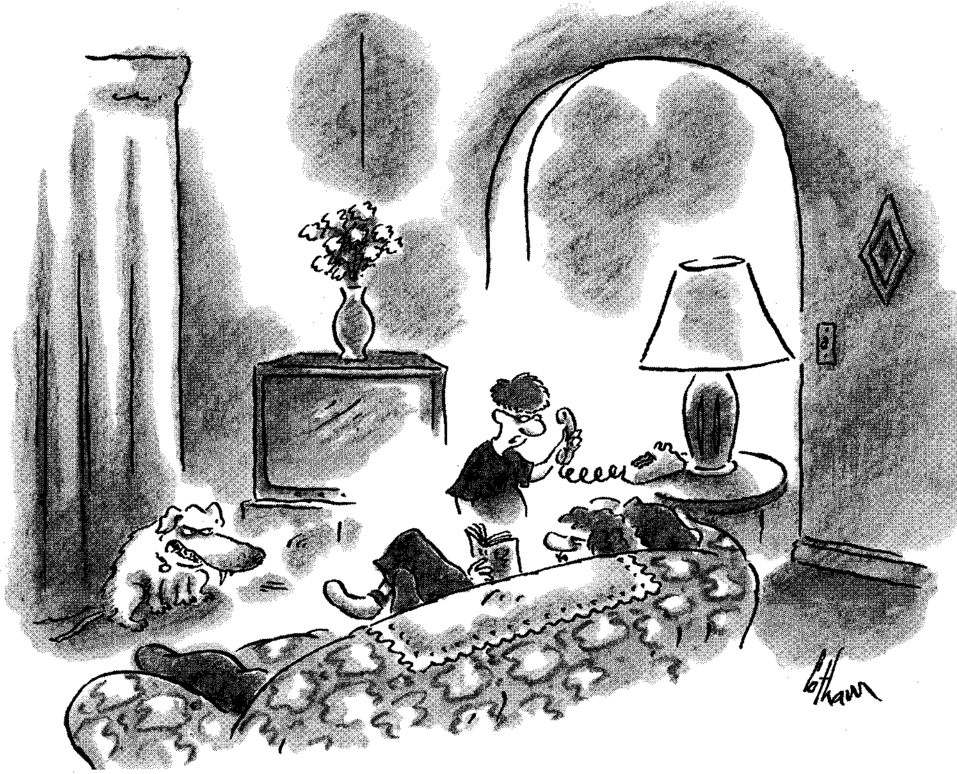

"The voice pattern is similar to Dad's."

• •

hope would be that other big donors would see this, and say, 'Oh. It's all right to give large sums of money to poetry.'" Brown, however, is not unwary of large sums. As he wrote in his poem "Money as Water," in 1999:

> "Cash flow" "liquid assets" "pooling our
> resources"—
> it's clear that money falls from heaven,
> drops in pennies, nickels, dimes, to gather
> in the small depressions of our hands. . . .
> It's clear how money
> passes through our hands like water,
> and our sources, once dried up, leave us
> thirsting after more. . . .
> How all we have
> goes down the drain, and we get soaked.

—*Nick Paumgarten*

HOME EC DEPT.
VACUUM CLEANERS, CHEAP

New York City may be facing steep tax increases and a generally diminished quality of life, but at least the federal government wants to buy everyone in town a new vacuum cleaner. Shortly after the attacks on the World Trade Center, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the New York State Department of Labor launched a joint disaster-relief initiative, providing millions of dollars in emergency aid to help New Yorkers repair damaged property, ride to work, and send their clothes to the dry cleaner. They have also been subsidizing the purchase of vacuum cleaners, air purifiers, air-conditioners, and replacement filters, to the tune of sixteen hundred dollars per household. The deadline to apply for reimbursement is November 30th; so far, few of the city's eligible residents have bothered.

Among those who find this shocking is Dr. Alan Pressman, a chiropractor, nutritionist, and radio personality. "They haven't done much to publicize this, but there is a complete program to clean up the air, paid for by FEMA," Pressman announced during a recent broadcast of "Healthline," his morning talk show on WWRL-AM. "Let me give you the number to call for the Clean Air Program. Just give them your name and address, they'll get you on their list, and they'll send you whatever you need."

As it turns out, the Clean Air Program is not connected with FEMA, or with any other government agency. It's not really a program, either. It's a company that sells vacuum cleaners and air purifiers. Like Dr. Pressman's endorsement, the company's flyers and handbills, which started to appear around town late last year, are deliberately oblique; they direct consumers to contact a Clean Air Info Line. One woman who responded said that she received a brochure in the mail about how to apply for the federal money; then she got a series of increasingly hard-sell follow-up calls.

A spokesman for FEMA says that the agency has kept a watchful eye on a number of companies that have been using the FEMA program to sell vacuum cleaners. Some time ago, it made the Clean Air Program, among others, remove from its Web site any references to sponsorship by FEMA. The spokesman said that these companies operate in a murky territory that is "unethical but not necessarily illegal." (The recent scheme of another entrepreneur to sell vacuum-cleaner receipts for twenty-five cents each, however, was both.) Meanwhile, the city's more established vacuum-cleaner salesmen find the whole thing a little unseemly. Paul McCormack, the senior marketing manager of the Miele appliance company, said, "It's not the Miele way, to look like we're taking advantage." Miele also does not like unauthorized dealers sellings its products. Earlier this year, it asked the Clean Air Program to stop advertising Miele machines on its Web site.

So who's behind the Clean Air Program? Around the appliance business, there's been some talk about a Columbia undergraduate, operating out of his dorm, and references to "a guy in Westchester." In fact, the owner and president of the Clean Air Program is a forty-six-year-old former publicist, standup comic, and actress named Laura Banks (she played Ricardo Mon-

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talban's eugenically engineered concubine in "Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan"). Most recently, Banks, who is the author of two books ("Love Online" and "Breaking the Rules: Last-Ditch Tactics for Finding the Man of Your Dreams"), wrote and starred in a "comedic documentary" about the New York dating scene. (The director, a young filmmaker named Keith Knight, is the Clean Air Program's vice-president of sales, and he runs the business from an apartment, just upstairs from his own, on East Twenty-eighth Street.) Banks is also the co-owner of a wholesale vitamin and "nutraceuticals" business. Her partner in that concern is Dr. Pressman, the radio host, who describes her as "a brainy beautiful blonde" and "a dynamite lady" but says he is not a partner in the vacuum venture. ("It's a sponsor on my radio show," he said. "It buys spots—just like Chevy or Ford might.")

Banks sees her work as a public service. "I grew up as an asthmatic," she said the other day. "So as soon as 9/11 happened I had a furious instinct to get these filters to people." She is aware that her company has generated some controversy—"Have we profited? Yes. Have we gotten people products they wouldn't have gotten otherwise? Yes. It's capitalism at its best"—but, in her mind, the only villain is the federal government.

"The government has millions of dollars available," Banks said. "It's done very little to promote the program, and now it's going to end it. What is it going to do with all that money?"

Banks said that after the FEMA reimbursement deadline has passed she plans to "morph" the Clean Air Program into CleanLivingGroup.com. ("I'm attempting to salvage the brand.") In addition to vacuums and air purifiers, the new Web site will sell water filters, chemical-free cleaning products, hundred-percent-cotton linens, and other "stuff that doesn't contaminate your home or the planet," as she put it.

"Alan Pressman has taught me so much about the importance of our inner environment," Banks said. "They do body tests, and they find that there's formaldehyde in us. And Styrofoam, from cups. I mean, my God—the toxicity!"

—*Adam Green*

WHEN IN ROME DEPT.

TALK TO THEM

In the new Pedro Almodóvar film, "Talk to Her," the thirty-five-year-old Spanish actor Javier Cámara plays Benigno, a male nurse who takes care of a young dancer in a coma, talking to her constantly in Spanish. But in the intermediate-English class that Ben Polk teaches at the Embassy Center for English Studies, in Chelsea, which meets five days a week for four hours a day, Javier Cámara plays Javier, an ardent young man from Madrid, who has decided to stay in New York for six weeks in order to learn English.

Javier's classmates know that he is famous in Spain and that he was the star of the popular sitcom "Seven Lives," because he talks about it so often in class. They also know about "Talk to Her," because he invited all of them to see it with him on the day it opened. This has not stopped them from laughing at his occasional outbursts, or from calling him Belly, because of his slight paunch.

Javier Cámara

On a recent Friday, the class was discussing the topics of love, marriage, and dating. "Today, we're dealing with a lot of idioms," Ben Polk, who is twenty-three, told his students. "Can you tell me about your first date?"

"I played trumpet," Tomoko, a young woman from Japan, said. "My school's band is only girls. We played with only boys' school band. He played trumpet, too."

"Oh! He played trumpet, too!" Javier said, loudly. The class erupted in laughter. Tomoko blushed, but continued, "We went to McDonald's. I was nervous. We promised to meet second time outside of school."

During a break, Javier chatted with his classmates about what it's like to be famous. "This city makes me feel normal, normal like you," he told them. "Here I feel free. I love to look at people. Last night, I saw a Pakistani dressed up like a Spider-Man. Very, very, very thin. Smoking in a corner. Very, very bored. I think this is amazing."

Back in class, Polk moved on to the topic of love. "I want to see if true love is possible in this class," he said. "We are going to describe our dream dates and see if they link up with anyone else in the class. I want to take an airplane with a girl to Mexico. I would love to go to dinner right on the beach, with mariachi musicians playing music. We'd have a wonderful dinner. Very spicy, and very expensive." He asked everyone to write a quick, anonymous account of a dream date.

One student wrote, "We'll order seafoods, and have it by 'one' spoon." Joy, a journalism student from Barcelona, wrote, "We'll eat fresh fish and seafood, with the best wines and candles." Gemini, who is from Taiwan, wrote, "We go to have BBQ, and we go home to chat continuously through the night." Kristyna, an economics student from Prague, wrote, "We spend night in gorgeous apartment with huge bed. Also huge whirlpool could be there!" Karin, a librarian from Geneva, wrote, "I will meet my ideal husband in Venice. We go to the movies. And then we speak about our ideas."

And Javier wrote, "Dear love, let's go to the stars! Where anybody can find us in our favorite landscape, the earth and the moon. Our two bodys together, in one only body. Can't you feel the love tonight? Let's go to the moon, cheek to cheek, dancing across the dry seas and the volcanoes, with our especial special rocket. Can you feel the air in your face? I'm your pilot. And you're my extraterrestrial. Show me your lighting and shining finger. Let's go to make bad things."

—*Marshall Heyman*

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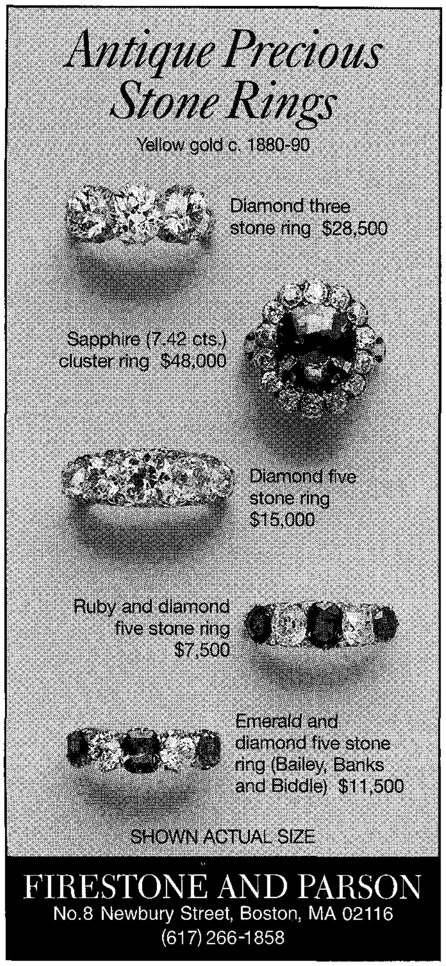
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ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

THE RINGMASTER

The garish and giddy world of Baz Luhrmann.

BY JOHN LAHR

The Australian director Baz Luhrmann is an impresario of himself; inevitably, for a protean talent, he is known by many names. At the entrance to his temporary base of operations, in a wood-beamed loft on Wooster Street, in New York, he lists himself as "C von G." It's an abbreviation for Count von Groovy, a nickname conferred on Luhrmann by his cohorts, in acknowledgment of both his sometimes grandiose pursuit of the extraordinary and his image as a swami of style. His more common moniker, "Baz," which Luhrmann, who is forty, started using in the seventies—he was christened Mark—is also intended to add a defiant lustre to a lifetime of self-invention. "I imagined I needed a fabulous name, an exotic name," he explains. "I was always theatrical. I was mythologizing my own existence from the age of ten." His longtime associate director, David Crooks, agrees. "He likes to see himself as a sort of director cum rock star," he says. "He is the consummate actor. It's very rare that he just takes off all his façades."

Luhrmann has been in town to oversee a production of Puccini's "La Bohème," which he first staged twelve years ago, at the Sydney Opera House, for sixteen thousand dollars, and which will open December 8th, in a six-and-a-half-million-dollar Broadway version. His company Bazmark Inq—which has its headquarters in a rambling Victorian mansion known as the House of Iona, in Sydney's seedy Kings Cross area—employs about twenty people, including an archivist, but Luhrmann is the source from which the energy flows. He is the visionary, the director, the huckster who pitches the product. "He is the fire," says Luhrmann's wife and partner, Catherine Martin, whose job it is to give his imaginings material form. (Last year, she won two Academy Awards, for the costumes and for the set design of his film "Moulin Rouge.") Luhrmann, who has a leading man's good looks and a mane of carefully layered and tinted hair, claims to see "no separation between work and life." For the last thirteen years, he has contrived to be always either in rehearsal, in production, or on the publicity trail. "Work is the prayer," he says. He is, first and foremost, an entrepreneur of astonishment. "It's not enough that you move through the world—you must change it to suit your expectation," he says. The root of his romanticism, he adds, is "a belief that things are better, more incredible, more wonderful than they actually are."

Over the last decade, Luhrmann has produced three flamboyant films that turned into box-office hits: "Strictly Ballroom," "Romeo + Juliet," and "Moulin Rouge." His movies are distinctive for both their speed and their sharpness. He says, "You've got to create some sort of experience where the audience goes, 'Gee, I feel aggressed, oppressed, but I'm excited.' It cannot be passive." He adds, "Stories never change. The way we tell them must change, so that we can reënliven the ears and the eyes of the audience." So far, his audiences have been outspoken. "Strictly Ballroom," which is reported to be one of the Pope's favorite movies, merges the David and Goliath and Ugly Duckling myths in a high-spirited and genial musical about competitive dancing. Luhrmann's deconstruction of Shakespeare, which updates "Romeo and Juliet" to the Miami gang wars, was controversial but won high praise from such actors as Sir Alec Guinness, who admired its "powerful visual imagery." Luhrmann hit rougher water with "Moulin Rouge," his attempt to reinvent the Hollywood musical; the film is an acrylic version of the fin de siècle in Paris, souped up with cartoonish characters and an eclectic pop score. The response, as noisy as the movie's soundtrack, was divided about evenly between those who called it genius and those who called it a mess. Collectively, the films, which Luhrmann refers to as "tweeners," for their ability to appeal to the art house and the multiplex, have grossed three hundred and forty-three million dollars, and they were recently released in a DVD boxed set as "The Red Curtain Trilogy"—a reference to the theatricality of Luhrmann's cinematic language. He has also moonlighted as guest editor of Australian *Vogue*. In 1999, he produced the spoken-word single "Everybody's Free (to Wear Sunscreen)," which went platinum in the United States and Britain. And in 2003 he will embark on what he calls his "next big gesture": a film of the life of Alexander the Great.

Bazmark Inq, which Luhrmann founded in 1997, is a sort of artistic holding company for his overheated imagination, with divisions for film, live entertainment, music, and publishing. The company's office is a hive of workers with whom Luhrmann has "a chemical connection," and whose storytelling talents maximize the impact of his work. Bazmark's coat of arms—an emu and a kangaroo—signals a certain lightness of spirit. Its motto—"A life lived in fear is a life half-lived"—broadcasts daring. Part Barnum and part Diaghilev, Luhrmann is also something of an imperialist. He controls the look of every poster, every sign, every piece of information connected to each of his shows, because, as he says, "you're already in the show, even before you've bought a ticket." In the age of the multinational corporation, he aspires to go beyond fame to trademark. "He does want the whole world to be affected by Baz Luhrmann," Crooks says. "To be in people's minds, to make them aware of the Bazmark product." He adds, "He's a humble person in a ruthlessly aggressive way."

When I met Luhrmann in San Francisco in September, "La Bohème" was having its last studio rehearsal before moving from the Presidio Army barracks, near the Golden Gate Bridge, to the Curran Theatre. (It would run for six weeks there, and then travel to New York.) Luhrmann has a quick, conceptualizing mind, and it's sometimes hard to follow him as he bushwhacks his way through a tangle of articulation to a new thought. But with actors on the rehearsal floor he is kind, clear, and to the point. He is intense but measured; he rarely yells. His way of registering irritation at the cacophony of cell phones in the vast rehearsal room, for instance, was to say to the assembled, "Would I be wrong in saying there is one too many telephones on today?" (His company runs the same way—in accordance with a book of protocols that Luhrmann has developed, "The Bazmark Way," to keep his artistic domain fair and efficient.)

Luhrmann with members of the cast of "La Bohème." Photograph by Dudley Reed.

His work is presentational; his direction, like a brass rubbing, attempts to make vivid and exact the outline of action. "You should actually be able to turn the sound off and follow the story," he says. To his Rodolfo, who on an impulse had carried the frail, consumptive Mimì to her garret chair and dumped her into it, he said, "Lead her into the chair. Like, 'I'm not trying to impose myself on you.' Find what that tells you. This is really a big moment. Stop and listen. Make it a big moment. When you're dealing with Mimì, she is the only purpose for you." Rehearsing the beginning of Act IV, when Colline and Schaunard arrive onstage with their paltry repast of bread and a single silvery fish, Luhrmann spent nearly an hour making a proper spectacle of the scene. "You're showing each other, but you're really sharing it with us," he said of Colline revealing his small catch. Here he imitated Colline flapping the fish matter-of-factly in his friend's direction, and said, "At the moment, it looks like fish, fish, fish, fish. There's no story." He added, "Just lean back in the chair and really connect with the fish moment." By the time he'd moved on to the next bit of low comedy, the fish business had been polished to a shine. "I'm the mechanic," he says. "I'm making the mechanism so the audience can have an experience."

Luhrmann maintains that he is "culturally blind." He says, "I refuse to be drawn into the belief that there is high culture and low culture. There are just things that travel through time and geography." (He, of course, hopes to be one of them.) He often invokes as icons of popular entertainment Shakespeare, Puccini, Molière, and Mozart, whose "absolute direct connection with the audience" he tries to emulate. Shakespeare, he says, "was singularly driven by

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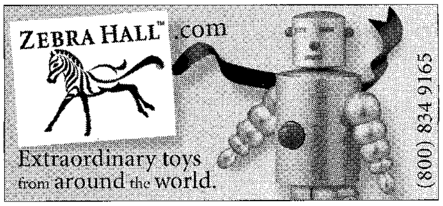
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—*Ciaran Carson*

the popular environment and by commercial realities. He knew he had to come from a personal place but then decode it, in a way in which the child, the adult, the Queen of England could read it." He adds, "That forced a form of genius."

In order to reach across classes and ages with his own flashy intelligence, Luhrmann chooses simple, mythic stories, which he can update in order to make their subliminal emotional essence accessible. "My mission is to make people feel first, so they can think, as opposed to making them think so that they can feel," he says, adding, "Psychological work is a fairly recent fashion. We actively reject the idea of psychological depth in character. We have overt archetypal character, overt archetypal story, so that you can have an exalted experience that is individual to you. My job is to vibe the zeitgeist and work out a way of releasing the power of the story."

Luhrmann's productions reflect the thin air of contemporary atmospheres. They conjure a garish, whirligig world that is almost giddy with a combination of doom and delight. The eclecticism of a media-saturated civilization comes through in a collision of fragments, filling the screen with print and image. Luhrmann's organizing principle is, he says, "collage, really—it's basically drawing from any source to make a bigger statement." Martin and Luhrmann create "pitch books" for each of their projects, in order to map out a visual ground plan and explain it to actors and producers. In a book for "Moulin Rouge," the hero, Christian, is captioned, "He's multi-talented, he's a genius, he's got the modern technique." Design, not depth, is Luhrmann's dominion. He mines the surface of his stories. Inevitably, therefore, "Romeo + Juliet" overlooks the poorly managed verse; and "Moulin Rouge," on first viewing, for me, anyway, was all surprise and no outcome. In order to find a simulacrum for the momentum of turn-of-the-century Paris, Luhrmann paced the movie to "the absolute extreme edge of what we felt the tempo could be and be comprehended." I found the film, with its constant quotations from classic musicals and its cinematic jaggedness, confounding. The old musicals were about flow and the feel of humanity; "Moulin Rouge" is about interruption and the feel of technology. What you get is sensation without joy. In subsequent screenings, this approach—no pauses, no paths, no future—seemed to me a bold attempt to elevate a claustrophobic style to the level of metaphor. The smash cuts, cross-cuts, zooms and sudden focus, the idiosyncratic soundtrack, the juxtaposition of tragedy and comedy all help to create a roaring—some would say maddening—cinematic language that nonetheless personifies the hellish interior space of contemporary life: what the art critic John Berger, speaking of Bosch's vision of hell, calls "the clamour of the disparate, fragmentary present . . . a kind of spatial delirium."

Luhrmann finds a special visual vocabulary for each event. In his "La Bohème," the opera is sung in Italian and performed in its entirety, but the story has been updated to Paris in 1957. And he has chosen to work against the typical operatic casting, by hiring young, attrac-

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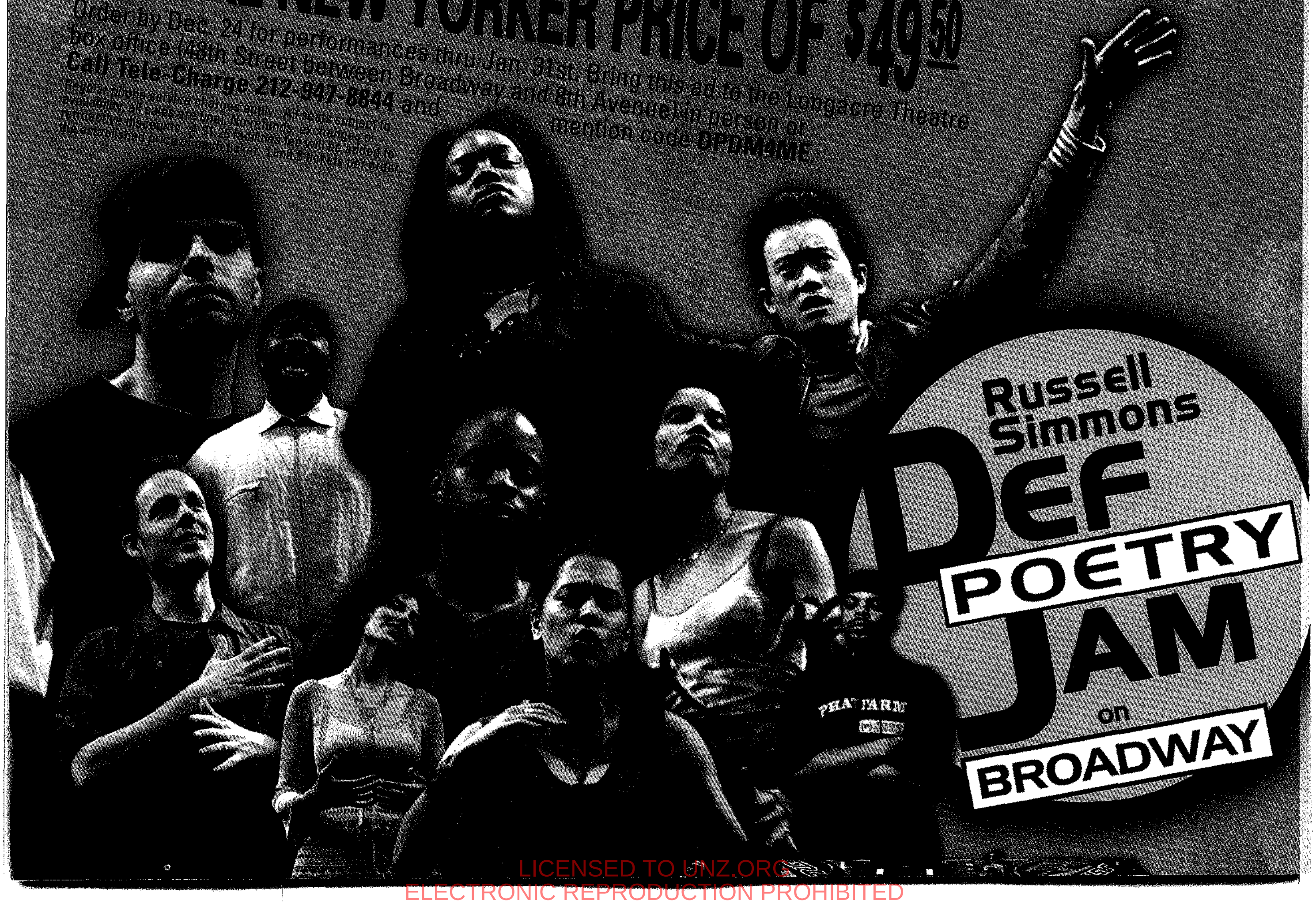
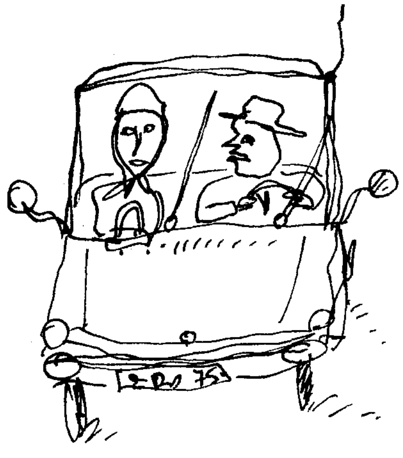


Russell Simmons
DEF POETRY JAM on BROADWAY

tive singers, who are believably sexual, to tell the story of starving artists and doomed love. (There are three sets of star-crossed lovers, because eight Broadway performances a week would be too vocally demanding for one couple. "I feel like an acrobat in a Chinese opera who spins plates on the tip of a stick," Luhrmann has said.) To free the production from its traditional naturalistic sedateness, Luhrmann has set the interior scenes in what looks like a revolving Rubik's Cube, pushed around by stagehands who are always visible to the audience, and he makes the supertitles a prominent scenic element by putting them inside the proscenium, not above or below it. "There's no curtain," he explains as the artist's garret is rolled onto its marks. "You walk in. People will be working onstage, singers warming up. Noise. The stage manager—if I can get the lass to embrace it properly—she'll be miked. You'll hear all her calls. She'll just go, 'Stand by,' and there'll be silence. The conductor will come on. She'll say, 'Thank you.' And—*bang!*—we'll go. You're on. So the curtain is created by the performance." (This has been slightly modified for the Broadway production.)

The maneuver takes the odor off the opera's romanticism. Far from diminishing the power of the music, Luhrmann insists, the emphasis on artifice makes viewers more receptive to the emotional weight of the story. "We show them our hands," he explains. "We say, 'Listen, just so you know, we're here to manipulate you and show you beautiful things. Apparently, you want to do this. Now do you want to be massaged?'" Where naturalism encourages a kind of passivity—"looking through a keyhole," Luhrmann calls it—his "real artificiality" draws the audience into the spirit of play. "You have to teach the audience the story as quickly as possible," he says—thus the gigantic neon sign hanging over the set that reads "L'Amour." "This is not a psychological drama where we're hiding plot. We tell you the plot, so that, as you accumulate tempo, you're breaking down and uniting the audience." He continues, "If you compare, for instance the tempo of Pavarotti's 'La Bohème,' which is gorgeous, to Toscanini, who conducted the original production, the original is much faster, because he was telling it to the groundlings—a gutsy romp, a fast comic story, ripping along at the speed of life."



Luhrmann, who is expert at staging entrances and exits, made a dramatic entrance of his own on life's stage. He was born in the back seat of a gray-green Vanguard van, in which his mother was being rushed to the hospital. The ringleader of four siblings, he learned the business of show at his family's Mobil gas station, nine hours into the Australian bush from Sydney. His parents, Leonard and Barbara, had paid twenty-three thousand dollars for a windswept place at a crossroads called Heron's Creek, a conurbation of eleven houses on the edge of the Watagan Forest. Luhrmann likens it to the diner in the film "Baghdad Café"—a solitary center of activity in the middle of nowhere. "My relationship with the audience is the same relationship that we had with our customers, that my father drummed into us," says Luhrmann, who pumped gas, waited tables, and ran a tropical-fish concession on the side. "They were our guests. We had to perform. The audience came in every day. We were the Luhrmann Boys. We had to dress up, wear little ties, white shirts, and suits." As cars rolled into the station, they were barraged by a loop of music—the Beatles, the Tijuana Brass, and "Pagliacci"—endlessly repeated over reel-to-reel Akai speakers. Later, his father set up a radio station, and Luhrmann would disk-jockey: "Let's hear that 'Pagliacci' one more time!"

Luhrmann calls his parents "an extremely intense couple, huge characters." Both were dreamers, in their own ways charismatic and self-dramatizing. Bar-

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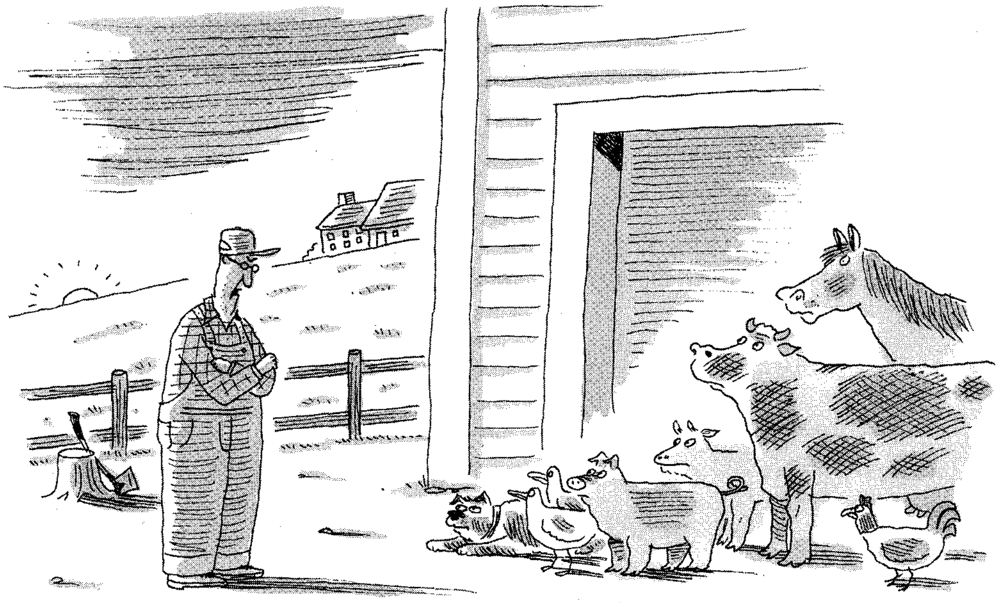
bara, in her later years, became a ballroom-dancing instructor. According to Luhrmann, she “always thought she had a light—she had good access to fantasy.” Leonard, who served in Vietnam as the head diver of the Australian Navy’s demolition squad and as an underwater photographer, was a series of contradictions: soldierlike and soft; disciplined and romantic; practical and problematic. “I think he could love Baz in a way that his mum couldn’t, because he was more true to himself,” says the Australian actress Catherine McClements, who lived with Luhrmann and collaborated with him for seven years in the early eighties. Barbara, she adds, was “too busy creating her own life and having her own sort of experiences.”

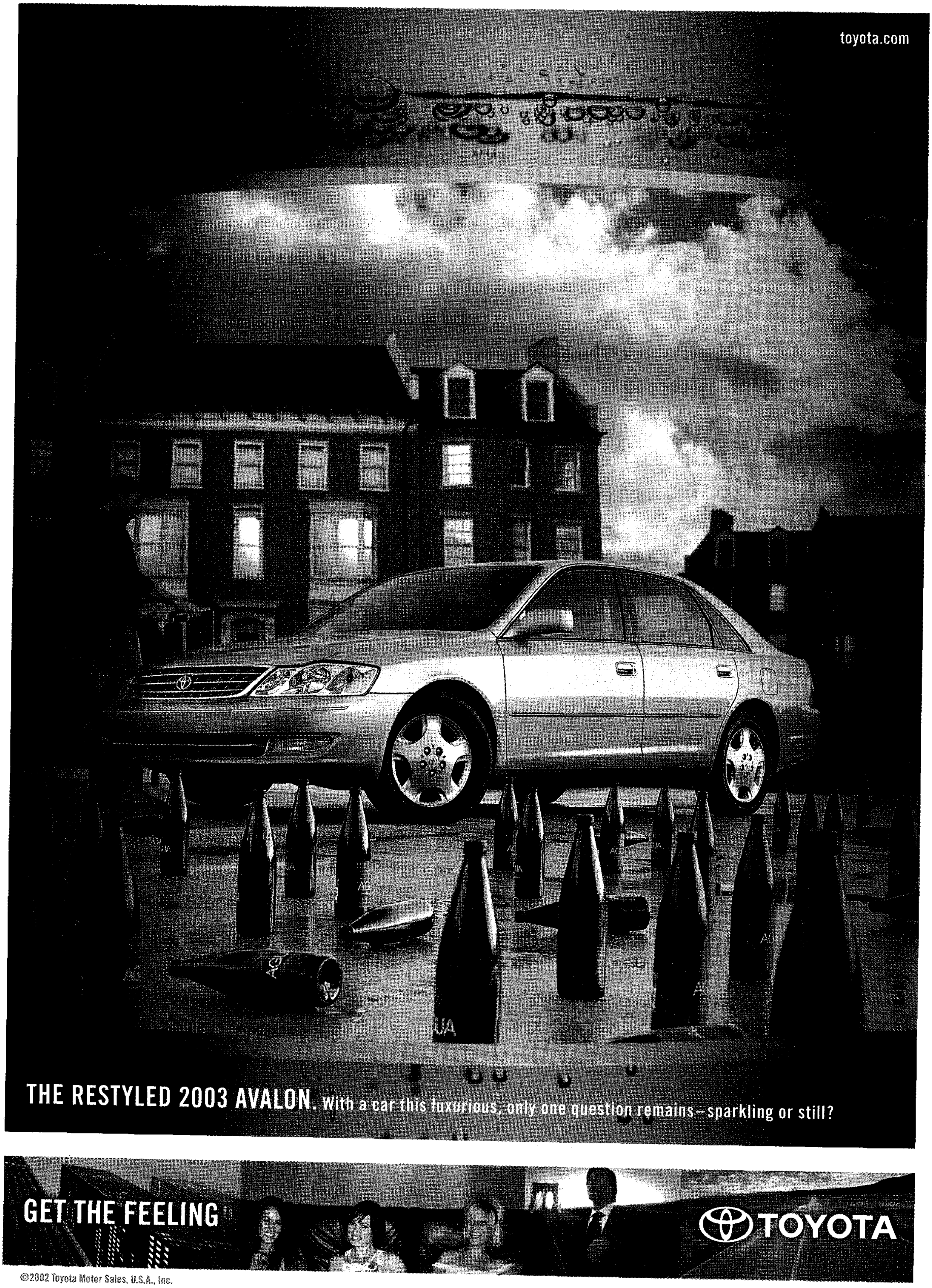
Although the Luhrmanns were just scratching out a living, they were determined to turn out extraordinary offspring. “We were brought up to believe that we were super-special, that there was nothing we couldn’t do,” Luhrmann says. (“The Renaissance men of Heron’s Creek” is how Catherine Martin characterizes the family.) “According to their father, you had to be the best,” Barbara says. “Their father never really became top of anything he did. He was a good instructor.” Leonard, who died of cancer while Luhrmann was shooting “Moulin Rouge,” oversaw his sons’ development in an almost military manner. He insisted on crew cuts, which set the boys apart. “This made our life hell,” says Luhrmann, for whom hair remains “a touchstone obsession.” “We three boys were constantly attacked and ridiculed. If you had short hair, you were uncool, a freak.” Leonard also kept them on a regimen of activities, which included horseback riding, scuba diving, farm and gas-station chores, commando training—“He’d drop us in the middle of the bush and we had to find our way home”—and competitive ballroom dancing, which meant a three-hour drive, three days a week. “One of the great things his parents gave him was no fear of mastering physical challenges,” Martin says. By the age of ten, Luhrmann also knew how to develop the negatives of the photographs he took with his first camera, a Brownie, and how to operate his father’s Straight 8 Bolex moving-picture camera. (Luhrmann made “Strictly Ballroom” without any additional cinematic tutelage.) “There was never a moment of peace,” he says of the “almost psychotic” amount of childhood activity. “If we ever just sat down, the sense from my father was that it was wrong. We weren’t allowed to eat until dinner. We had work to do. It was absolutely non-stop until we dropped at night. We got up early in the morning, and—*bang!*—you’d do it again.” He adds, “My family was a cult.”

Luhrmann’s mercurial quality and his fertile fantasy life (“I imagine twenty-four hours a day—it’s like a storm,” he says) seem to derive from the habit of ducking and diving he adopted as a child, in order to evade his parents’ control. “Both parents had tyrannical natures,” Martin says. Leonard imposed himself; Barbara exerted her power by withdrawing. “Baz got out of things by being incredibly entertaining,” Martin adds. “He was always in his head, maybe because he thought he wasn’t fabulous enough. He had to create it.” In person and in public, Luhrmann accentuates the positive aspects of his tense, hard-striving childhood. But no one courts fame out of happiness. “There was a lot of shadow, sure,” he admits. “We lived daily with death. We lived on a bridge, which on a regular basis caused car accidents that killed people. My job was to man the phone or call the local cop. Violence was around. The level of drama was extreme.” But, when pushed to speak about the shadows in his own life, Luhrmann struggles to find language. His long silence surprises him. “I’m never at a loss for words, as you know,” he says. What he can’t bring himself to acknowledge is that, for part of his childhood—until he was ten, according to his mother—the man whom he now thinks of as “a wonderful father” was an alcoholic, and that by his teen-age years the family atmosphere, according to his mother, was “dreadful.” “Their father was too hard, too harsh, almost impossible to live with,” Barbara says. Leonard sometimes wouldn’t speak to her for three weeks at a time. “Fifteen years. I couldn’t take it anymore.” Their breakup was violent and traumatic. “It was a horrendous day,” Luhrmann recalls. “There were many horrendous days. There was my sister and a lamp shade in a car. And screaming and hitting and yelling. And she was gone.”



“Who tipped off the turkey?”

Luhrmann remained with his father at Heron’s Creek, nursing subversive longings for the big city and, he says, “aware that we were perhaps incarcerated in this other world.” After about eighteen months, Len remarried; three and a half years later, Luhrmann, then fifteen, ran away. He ended up living in Sydney with his mother and didn’t see his father again for seven years. He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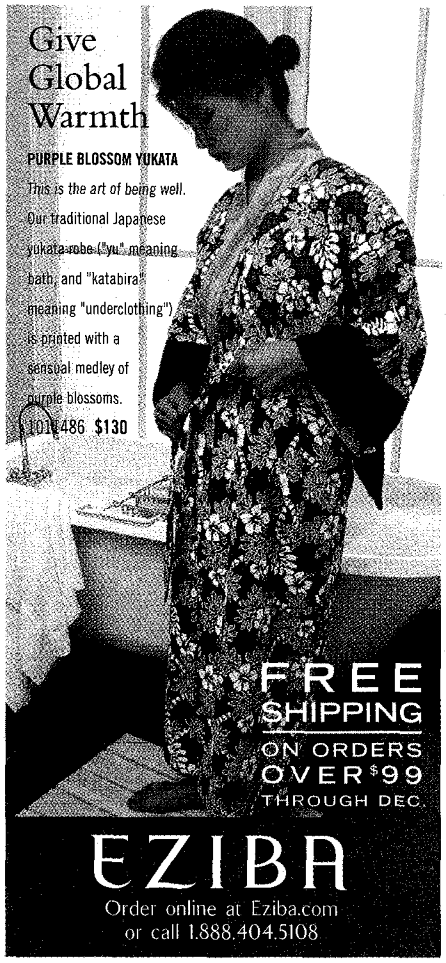
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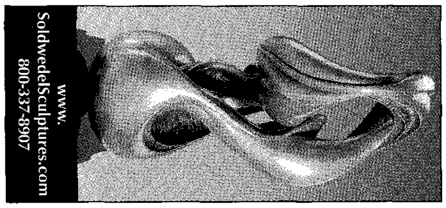
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attended an all-boys Catholic high school, which he found, he says, "a bit of a shock." He rebelled by growing his curly hair long, and he earned the nickname Basil Brush—after a furry fox puppet on British television—which was the derogatory origin of Baz. Around 1979, "as an act of defiance against this derision," Luhrmann says, he changed his name officially to Bazmark. "Baz and Mark are the two sides of who I am," he says.

Luhrmann was not an outstanding student, but he was drawn to acting. (He played Sky Masterson in a high-school production of "Guys and Dolls.") "I can remember walking back from the beach, the heat coming off the road, and Baz talking about great acting and great theatre and great movies, and wanting to be great," the screenwriter Craig Pearce says. (Pearce, who was Luhrmann's best friend in high school, is the co-author of all three of his films.) He adds, "What I was attracted to in Baz was this feeling of being part of something bigger. It was going to happen." Pearce and Luhrmann didn't aspire to be jobbing actors; they wanted to be, as Pearce puts it, "Marlon Brando, Montgomery Clift, James Dean, Mick Jagger, all rolled into one." He says of Luhrmann, "He wanted to be extraordinary and, in a sense, when you were around Baz life *was* more extraordinary." For Luhrmann, acting was a natural direction; he had been role-playing all his life. "In order to avoid confrontation, he would become whatever was asked of him," his mother says.

Luhrmann applied to Sydney's National Institute of Dramatic Art—"the grand temple of serious acting," he calls it. He was rejected, but on the same day he received word that he'd been cast as a pimp, playing opposite Judy Davis in "Winter of Our Dreams." He was eighteen. He went straight from high school to a full-fledged acting career. He was featured in one of Australia's most popular television shows, "A Country Practice," and had a convincing cameo as a transsexual on another show. For a documentary he conceived about Sydney's homeless youth—"Kids from the Cross"—he shed his suburban looks, went undercover, and slept rough for three months. When Luhrmann couldn't find financing for the film, he took the footage to a television company, which turned it into an embarrassing program that left him "morally confused" and brought him into the unfortunate glare of Australia's tabloid press. "HOW KIDS SURVIVE IN A CESSPOOL—THIS IS SICK" was the headline in one Sydney paper. The result, he says, was "a very, very, very strong drive to be creatively responsible." Prodded also by the fact that "sitting around waiting for the phone to ring was basically killing me," he formed his first theatre company, The Bond, in 1981.

At twenty, Luhrmann was accepted at the National Institute of Dramatic Art. By his own admission, he became "internalized, self-conscious, very intense." He says, "I have always had a natural connection with people. But I think I read that as uncool and not what serious artists did. I was very unapproachable." He cultivated a sense of mystery and danger. "People imagined that he was uncontrollable, that he was scary, that he broke the rules," Catherine McClements says. Luhrmann did his best not to disappoint. To act Chekhov, he studied Russian; to play a Chinese peasant in "Fanshen," David Hare's play about Communist Chinese agrarian reform, he walked around with his books in a pail and put his fist through a window, trying to pull a punch. "I created a character who wasn't me," he says. He explored the postures and attitudes of Elvis, Nijinsky, David Bowie, and Prince. Obsessed by African-American culture, Luhrmann even turned up for one class as a black woman. "He was incredibly convincing," McClements says. "One time, we were listening to classical music. He said, 'You've really gotta forgive me for this.' He went off, and that night at the corroboree"—an aboriginal word for gathering—"he dressed up as an opera singer, with the whole gear, lip-synching way before it became popular. The drag was brilliantly done."

McClements helped Luhrmann develop "Strictly Ballroom," which began life as an acting-school exploration and a metaphor for, among other things, his increasing sense of "creative oppression" at NIDA. "I'm sick of dancing someone else's steps," the hero of "Strictly Ballroom" says, before he finds a way to triumph on his own terms. When Luhrmann entered NIDA, he had an acting career, an agent, his own theatre company; when he left, he had nothing. "He entered drama school as a fantastic actor and through the process at NIDA became worse and worse," McClements says. "He became too self-aware." He felt stalled. He was frightened. "Things weren't going to plan," Luhrmann says. "I had a genuine breakdown." For about a month, he sat paralyzed in the squalor of a ramshackle fishing hut, barely moving or speaking. Finally, one day, he remembers, he walked to the beach, ate a popsicle, and started to read the paper. "I suddenly thought, I'm going to do something—I'm going to put on a play," he says. "I got my old company back and convinced everyone I could do this production 'About the Beach,' a sort of myth set in the beach culture of lifeguards and surfing. From that day on, I was back to being who I was before I went to NIDA."

Luhrmann likes to tell the story of his first screening at Cannes, in 1992, with "Strictly Ballroom." "I remember every second of it," he says. "Nervously hanging up signs: 'Come and see our film.' A very small audience coming to see it, then a standing ovation. Then us being the toast of the town. Twenty-four hours later, another screening being called—you couldn't get in. A security guard leaned over and said to me, 'Monsieur, your life will never be the same again.' " So it has proved. Fame is a live wire that Luhrmann can't let go of. "You can't shake it off at the flick of a switch," he says. "You can't go home. Your home is the public world." Now he lives at full tilt. "If I'm able to run the movie of my life, in my mind it'd better be a good one," he says. "You can't afford any sloppy scenes."

Luhrmann is built for speed. He's thin, lithe, and streamlined, rejecting anything that might weigh him down. His collaboration with Martin has only increased his velocity. From the outset, for Luhrmann, artistic partnership was crucial to creative success. "He definitely needs someone to be in love with him, to be obsessed with him and what he's doing, and to make him feel good about it," McClements says. "He doesn't want to be alone." Martin was a designer in her third year at NIDA when, in 1986, Luhrmann discovered her and she joined his opera and theatre companies. Her first real memory of Luhrmann, though, came a year later, when they were working together on "Lake Lost," an opera he was directing. "He had two stage managers pushing this rowboat on wheels with two of the lead players inside. I just remember thinking that this man was a fucking genius. It was so beautifully artificial." She adds, "What Baz forces you to do is go through the cliché to a transcendental understanding."

Of their at times volatile early relationship she says, "We connected in a profound way. It was more than romantic love or sexual attraction. It was bigger and more frightening than that. He not only channels himself through the collaboration—he pulls out the best in you." She adds, "He's the magic, but I'm the high priestess." Luhrmann and

Out with the old
and in with the uh-oh

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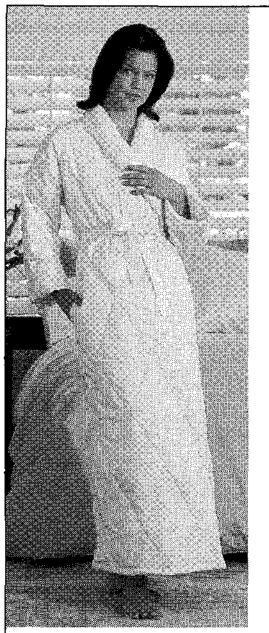

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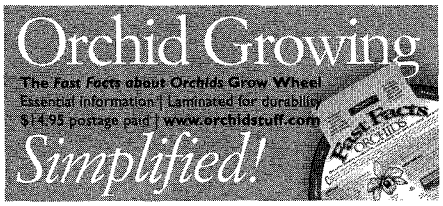

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Martin were married at a Sydney registry office in 1997. In the post-wedding celebration, Martin, who is thirty-seven and known as C.M., literally ascended to her new role on the stage of the Sydney Opera House, where "La Bohème" had played. There, under the "L'Amour" sign, in a notional chapel made of candles, she rose into the scene on a hydraulic lift as the producer Noel Staunton, who now heads Bazmark's live-entertainment division, descended from above in an angel costume, to officiate in yet another Baz Luhrmann spectacle.

In the vortex of his production and promotion schedules, one way that Luhrmann stops time is to keep a diary. The frontispiece of each year's journal, which is about the size of an accounting ledger, is a photograph of his current project; the back cover shows his next one. Instead of writing about his hectic life, he fills the diary pages with a visual record: images and mementos snatched from the blur of hours, which reflect him back to himself. The quick inventory I compiled, as I flipped through his 2002 diary during a production meeting, included:

January 15: Luhrmann asleep on C.M.'s lap. A letter from Martin Scorsese.

January 21: The Golden Globe Awards: Luhrmann stands with Nicole Kidman on a red carpet.

Luhrmann and C.M. reclining in deck chairs on their hotel patio. Hair unkempt, unshaven, Luhrmann looks hungover. C.M. holds up an ad in the L.A. *Times:* "3 Winners: Best Picture, Best Actress, Best Original Score."

February 14: A card from Kidman: "She sings, she dances, she dies. . . .Thank you for giving me the gift of a lifetime. Nic"

March 5: Luhrmann with Debbie Reynolds and Carrie Fisher.

March 24: Ticket stubs to the 74th Academy Awards—Center B-1. A photo of Rupert Murdoch holding one of C.M.'s Academy Awards; C.M. stands beaming beside him with the other Oscar.

May 10: India—a map of the state of Kerala.

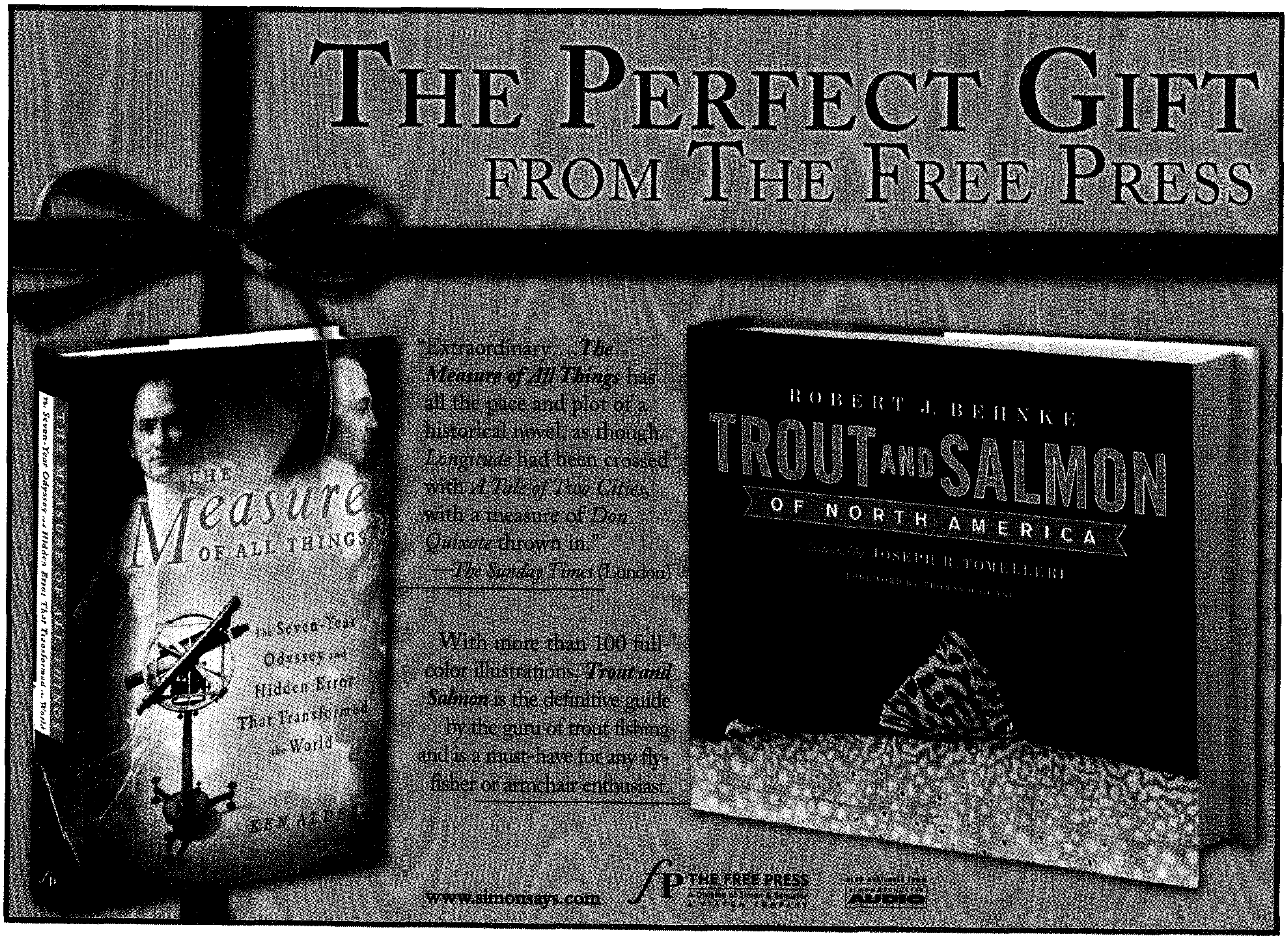
Years, for Luhrmann, are measured not by days but by work, and his chronicle consists mostly of lists. "When I get hugely insecure, I make lists and lists and lists of things I have to do," he says. The 2002 diary began with a list of "goals." Among them were "Conceive a child" and "ISSUE—I am exhausted and fucked trying to conceive and develop Bohème."

Luhrmann's diary is symptomatic of something essential in his performing nature: he is always watching himself go by. "It's not vanity as we understand it," McClements says. "It's experimenting with himself." "He spends a lot of time looking at himself in the mirror," Crooks says. Luhrmann, who, like the characters in "Strictly Ballroom," was a ballroom-dancing champion as a boy, believes in looking good. He doesn't allow the cast to see him eat, and, before he goes on the rehearsal floor, if there is anyone from the press around he often spends a few minutes in Hair and Makeup. (The stated Four Pillars of the House of Iona are "Transportation, Communication, Accommodation, and Hair." "Over the years, I've learnt that these four elements are the ones to watch out for in derailing the creative process," he explains.) According to Crooks, "If there's a photo to be done, there's just a little touch of something, a little Aschenbach moment." Still, his self-regard has nothing to do with looking inward. "Only look *out*," he advises. Like his films, he resists psychology. "I put my own character off-limits for a very long time," he explains. Luhrmann recalls listening to Leonardo DiCaprio, who starred in "Romeo + Juliet," do impersonations. "He's a fantastic impersonator," he says. "We're sitting in a circle. We're laughing at his Johnny Depp, Robert De Niro—great. Marlon Brando. And he does another one. Everybody's laughing, laughing, laughing. And I'm going, 'Oh, who is it?'" Luhrmann says, "It was me."

When we sat down to talk alone, during a rehearsal break, on what turned out to be Luhrmann's fortieth birthday, September 17th, he was considering the nature of his self-invention. "Is it that I construct a life that seems to be tremendously well stage-managed?" he asked. "Or is it that my zealous romanticism has caused a very interesting staging of my life? The curtain is coming down on the first act of my life. It's ending with the production I began with, thirteen years ago." He added, "I'm not young anymore. And I'm gonna be old. The new journey is a spiritual one." Later, in front of the cast and crew, who presented him with wine and proffered a birthday cake with a burst of song—"Couldn't we get decent singers to sing me 'Happy Birthday'?" Luhrmann said—he feigned surprise. "I couldn't think of a better way of turning forty than just to be in the middle of doing 'La Bohème.' With such risk out there, with all of you." He went on, "If you turn forty, the thing that everyone talks about is you feel your life's over. I just feel like I'm right in the middle of life. I am very, very privileged. Well, listen, look: I'll tell you what"—here he looked at the cake and then at his watch. "Beautiful, but the show must go on."

Although the three films of "The Red Curtain Trilogy" are devoted to the conventions of traditional narrative and heterosexual love, the camp style of Luhrmann's telling always subverts normality. This contradiction seems to express what McClements calls his "uncertain heart." He seems almost obsessed with the romantic entanglements of others. "For somebody who's not an overtly sexual being, he loves watching people in love," Crooks says. Luhrmann admits that his fascination with "Romeo and Juliet" was about "coming to terms with an impossible love, which could not be, no matter how perfect." When he talks about "Alexander the Great," his preoccupation with love seems to reveal the autobiography beneath the archetype. "I'm thinking of doing a work about a young historical figure who must continually succeed and conquer because of a lack of love, because he is pursuing a phantom love," Luhrmann told San Francisco's *Bay Area Reporter*. "He goes on and on until there can be no more conquering, and at a certain point you've got to realize that that phantom love will never be found."

After "La Bohème" opens on Broadway, and before Luhrmann gets into the heavy lifting of "Alexander the Great," he will do what he always does at the end of an epic undertaking: go walkabout. "I never know where I'm going," says Luhrmann, who ended up in Alexandria on his last sojourn. He will turn up at the airport, he will put his credit card on the counter, and, except for a few calls home during the couple of months away, he will get lost on the planet. "One gets connected to the street, to the world, to life," he says. "I think it's absolutely fundamental because that's the audience." He also reconnects to his own romantic notion of "the wandering storyteller." In this persona, he is a denizen of the underworld, albeit a Prada bohemian, a pilgrim in search of an answer to some longing he can't quite bring himself to define. One night over dinner in San Francisco, talking about Alexander the Great, Luhrmann almost found the words. "He needed love from everyone," he told me. "The love of the army, the love of Hephaestion, the love of Roxanne. I understand without any complication what it is to feel the need." ♦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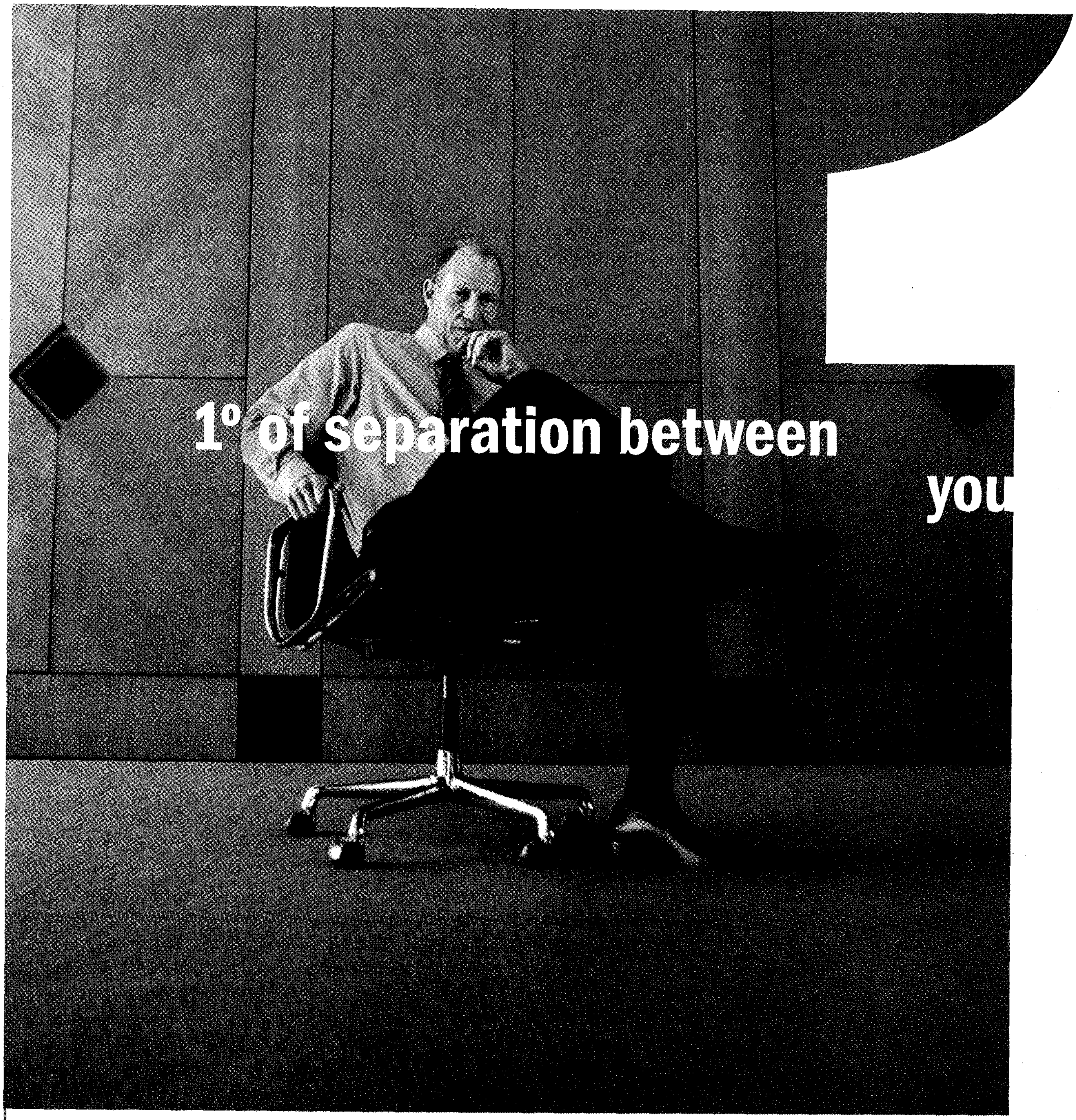

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PSYOPS: A NOTE FROM YOUR MOTHER

BY FRANK GANNON

Officials familiar with the psychological operations, or "psyops," plan say its aim is to persuade Iraqi weapons handlers to disobey any order Saddam Hussein issues to launch chemical or biological attacks in the face of a U.S. invasion. Methods would include hacking into Iraqi military computers, dropping leaflets on Iraqi military bases, jamming Iraqi radio and television and substituting signals sent by special U.S. broadcasting aircraft, and contacting key officers through clandestine intermediaries or even e-mail. —*USA Today, September 23, 2002.*

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Does *everybody* dress like Pancho Villa? Does everybody have a bullet strap like that? I'll tell you how it looks. It looks like you're going to get in trouble, that's how it looks.

Did you see that movie "Gandhi"? Wasn't that good? Was Gandhi violent? Did he kill people? Did he hurt other people? No, he didn't. Didn't he win the Nobel Peace Prize or something? That's a very big feather in his hat. He gave his parents something to be proud of. Do you think they give the Nobel Peace Prize to people who act like you're acting? No, they don't.

Is that smoke I see? That better be gunfire.

You're making a disgrace of yourself. Who told you to do this? Did Saddam Hussein tell you? If Saddam Hussein told you to jump off a bridge, would you do it?

I cut out this article from a magazine for you to read. It's very important. It's about your feet. You only get one pair of feet.

Where did you get that weapon? What are you thinking with that weapon? Do you think a weapon makes you a big scary man? It doesn't. There are ways to be a big man, but big men don't carry weapons.

Stand up straight. You look like your Uncle Ali.

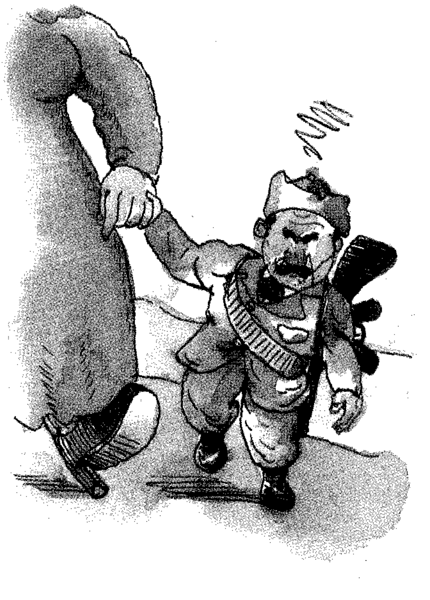
I'm ashamed of you. Look at you. You could be a nice, good person. You used to be so cute. But look how you turned out. This isn't nice. This isn't good. Stand up straight.

I hope you don't dress that way when there's people.

You are so handsome. Why are you hiding your face with that droopy burnous?

Where did you get that beard? I'm too young to have a son with a beard.

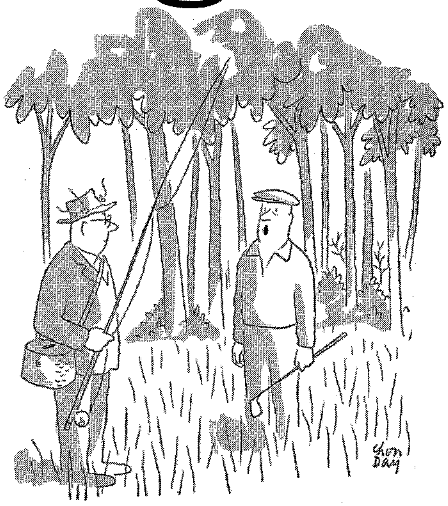
You don't have to be this way. Do you like yourself when you're acting this way? You know what I want? First, I want you to get a haircut. I want you to go and take a nice warm bath. Then I just want you to sit all alone and think about all the things you are doing. I want you to take a piece of paper and write down everything you can think of to change, to be the good, nice person that I know. Take your time. Then I want you to read the list three times just silently. Then I want you to get dressed and come back here and then we'll start over.



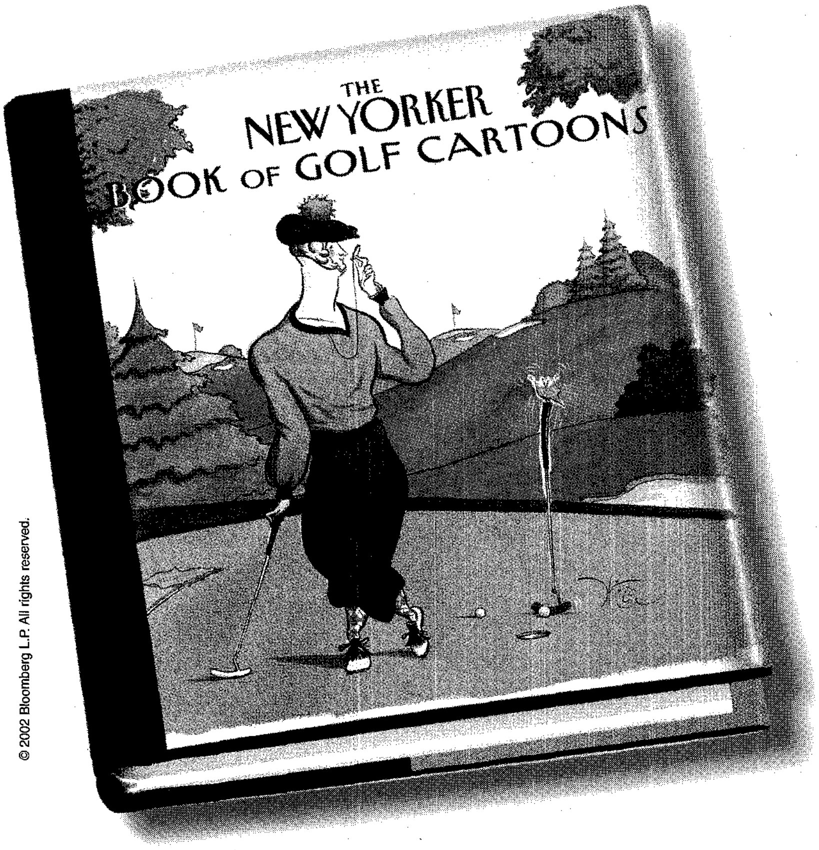
And after you do all those things you're going to have a big nice surprise just for you. Don't tell anybody. But first I want to look at your room. ♦

BARRY BLITT

Tee up for laughter!



"*No, I found my ball. I'm looking for the golf course.*"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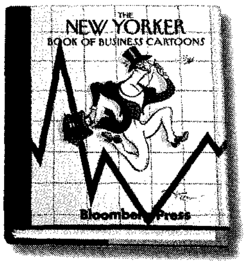
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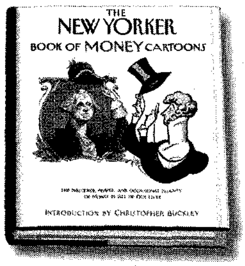
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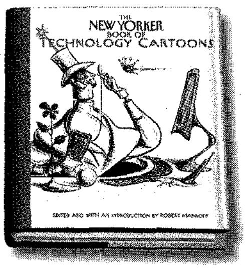
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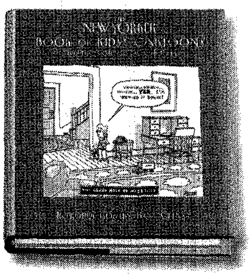
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OUR LOCAL CORRESPONDENTS

ON THE BRIDGE

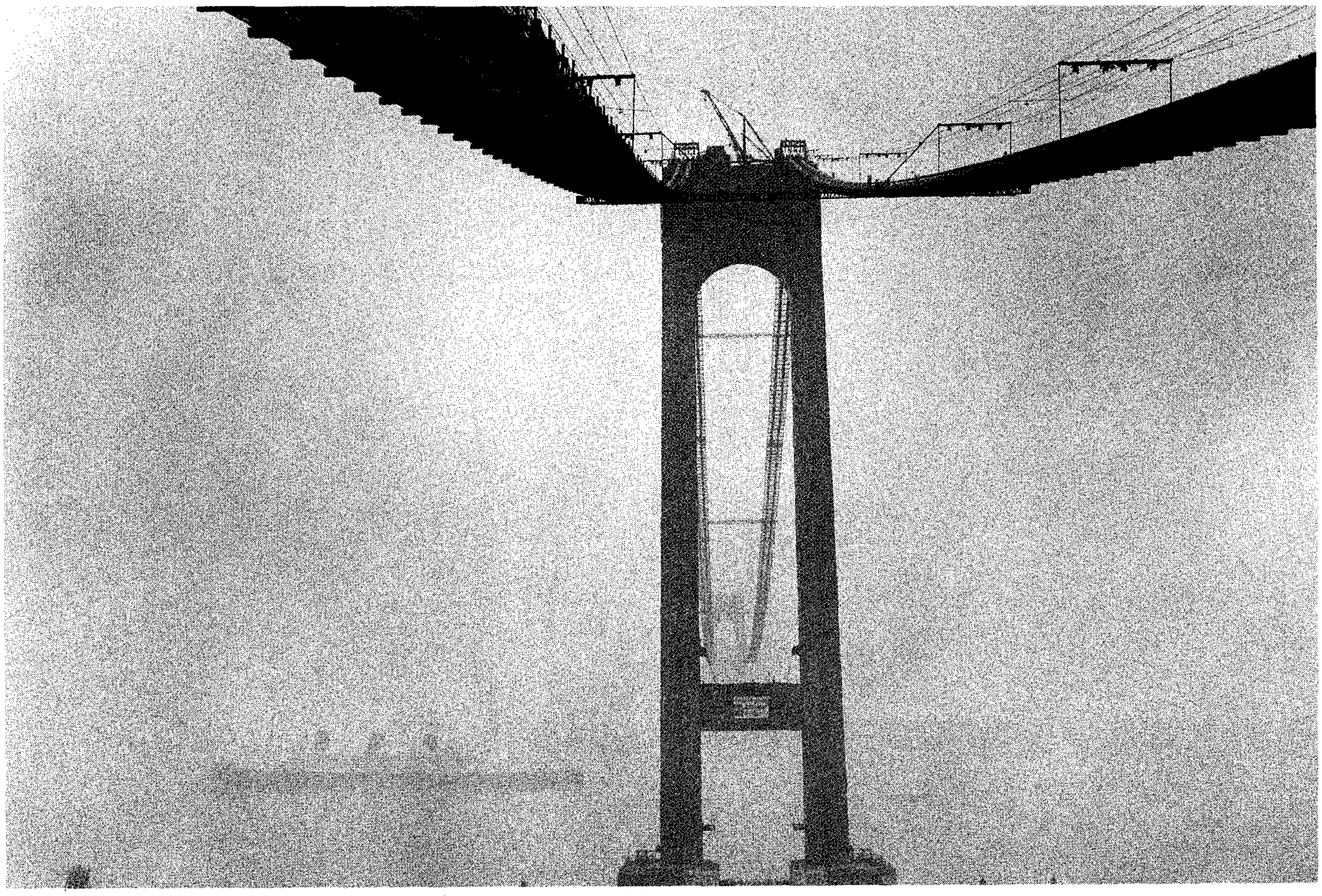
The Verrazano-Narrows and the shape of New York.

BY GAY TALESE

The Verrazano-Narrows Bridge is a commercial colossus that is crossed every day by two hundred thousand vehicles, generating a daily revenue of more than six hundred and thirty thousand dollars. The bridge is a poetic construction of enduring beauty and utility, and when it was being built, in the early nineteen-sixties, I often put on a hard hat and followed the workers across the catwalk and watched for hours as they crawled like spiders up and down the cable ropes and straddled beams while tightening bolts with their spud wrenches. Sometimes they would give a shove with their gloved hands against a stalled spinning wheel, or bang a shoulder against tons of framework dangling from a crane—the framework representing one of millions of links in the rainbow-shaped roadway that would eventually extend for two and a half miles across the New York Harbor, connecting the boroughs of Brooklyn and Staten Island and spreading trepidation among the people who lived there.

Recently, nearly four decades after the Verrazano's completion—it opened to traffic on November 21, 1964—I revisited the bridge as it was getting a face-lift from crews of maintenance workers. The bridge is scraped and repainted from top to bottom every ten years, at a cost to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority of about forty million dollars.

The general manager of the bridge, a man named Robert Tozzi, oversees its day-to-day operation from a brick office next to the off-ramp near the Staten Island anchorage. He is a mild-mannered fellow of fifty-two who stands six feet four and weighs two hundred and fifty pounds. As a college student more than thirty years ago at St. John's University, he worked for three summers as a toll collector on the Verrazano, beginning in 1969. The booth he occupied is a short walk from his current office. On his walls are monitors showing the flow of traffic across the bridge from thirty-two camera angles (they offer views from the two towers, the upper and lower roadways, the anchorages, and other points), but nothing he sees varies much from what he saw the day before, or the day before that. Three vehicles will break down almost every day, causing traffic jams. Tozzi expects, and usually gets, two auto crashes a day—fender benders or other collisions that don't result in serious injuries. Traffic fatalities are rare, perhaps one every two years. Each year, on average, two individuals select the bridge as the jumping-off point to end



From Staten Island, the bridge is the highlight of the horizon, the link to Manhattan's towers and the mammoth mosaic of Brooklyn.

their lives. The last suicide took place during the summer of 2001.

Robert Tozzi's father was a maintenance foreman with the Triborough Authority, which built many of the city's toll-collecting facilities, including the Verrazano, and it was through his father's introduction that the younger Tozzi came to the agency. After his summer jobs in the toll booth, he was hired full time in 1973 to drive one of the Verrazano's tow trucks, which help to remove disabled cars from the roadway. In 1974, when he was twenty-four, Tozzi was offered the opportunity to drive one of the agency's sedans chauffeuring the Triborough's former chairman, Robert Moses, around the boroughs. For the next five years, dutifully and diplomatically, Tozzi drove Moses to countless locations. He knew that Moses, deficient in grace even in the best of times, was embittered over the bad press he had been receiving after the publication, in 1974, of Robert Caro's biography of him, "The Power Broker," which was subtitled "Robert Moses and the Fall of New York." He was approaching the end of a long career as an urban planner of virtually unchallenged power—he had masterminded the creation of the Verrazano and other great undertakings that he believed the public should be grateful for—and he found himself being excoriated in the media for demolishing vast areas of living space and dispossessing multitudes of people in order to build new highways, bridges, tunnels, and tollgates.

Robert Moses is long deceased, as is the Verrazano's chief engineer, O. H. Ammann, whose prodigious career began with his design of the George Washington Bridge, which was completed in 1931. And so are many of the residents and merchants of Brooklyn and Staten Island who, in the late nineteen-fifties, tried without success to stop Moses from destroying their neighborhoods, which stood in the proposed pathways to the bridge. Other residents and merchants, however, recently told me that the new locations into which they had been forced to move their businesses or domiciles turned out to be not as depressing as they had imagined. In general, they said, the buildings they moved into were in better condition than the ones they had surrendered to the wrecking crews. What they had lost in sentimental value was irredeemable, and they continued to resent the arbitrary power that Moses had wielded over their lives. But they gradually had become resigned to the inevitability of change and their inability to resist it. Among those who had spoken out against Moses's plan for the bridge was a dentist, Henry Amen, whose office in the Bay Ridge section of Brooklyn was designated to be levelled and paved over by the road builders. Dr. Amen was fortunate to find a new office convenient enough for his Bay Ridge-based practice; he is still working there today, at the age of seventy-six, with a partner who happens to be his thirty-four-year-old daughter.

Another anti-Moses spokesman I talked with at the time of the protests was a mortician, Joseph V. Sessa, who had sombrely predicted his firm's demise after learning that the condemned property in his neighborhood would result in the dispersal of twenty-five hundred families "from which to draw." This figure was more than a third of the estimated seven thousand people who were being dislodged, but the mortician, unlike the dentist, did not see his workplace destroyed. It was situated at a safe distance from the targeted area, on Fort Hamilton Parkway, and it remains there today, still devoted to burying people—including Mr. Sessa, who died in 1977, at the age of seventy-nine. His resourceful grandson and namesake now operates the family business, and has expanded it to include two other mortuaries, elsewhere in Brooklyn.

In Staten Island, too, the Verrazano is no longer an object of concern or angst. Here a new generation of settlers has grown up with the bridge, and they cherish it as the highlight of their horizon and as their link to the mammoth mosaic that is Brooklyn and to the waterfront towers of Manhattan, which Truman Capote once described as a "diamond iceberg."

Although Staten Island's population of four hundred and forty-three thousand (in a city of more than eight million) is now nearly double that of the pre-bridge figure, and although the is-

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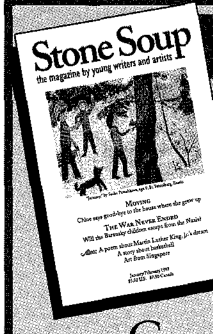

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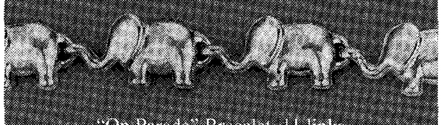

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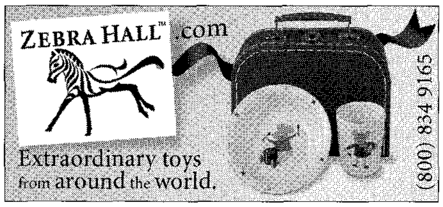

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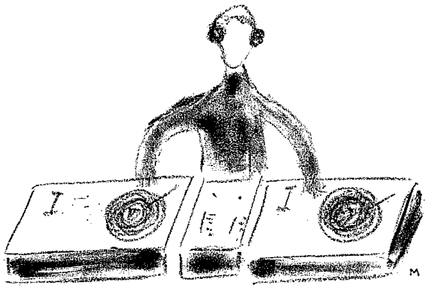
land's once sprawling farmlands have disappeared together with the country roads along which motorists once moved bumpily past herds of grazing cattle, a provincial atmosphere still prevails. Along tree-shaded residential streets, one sees row upon row of single-family white frame houses with shuttered windows and roadside mailboxes and tidy lawns with poles bearing American flags, which were on display long before the recent nationwide proliferation of patriotism prompted by the attacks of terrorists. Staten Islanders are traditionally conservative, standard-bearing advocates of law and order. A disproportionate number of them serve the city as police officers and firefighters, and among the three hundred and forty-three New York City firefighters who lost their lives in the World Trade Center disaster seventy-eight lived on Staten Island.

Historically, the island's social and political landscape was shaped by residents of Irish ancestry. But that balance began to shift in the nineteen-sixties, with the arrival of myriad Brooklynites who had lost their homes near the water's edge during the construction of the bridge. "In Brooklyn, these people had been liberal cliff dwellers in high-rise apartments," Thomas R. Sullivan, a seventy-seven-year-old Staten Islander who retired last year after serving nearly fourteen years as a Democratic judge on the New York State Appellate Court, recently explained to me. "But once they arrived in Staten Island, bought their first home, and got their first tax bill they suddenly became conservatives." Now the political power on the island has shifted from the Irish to their co-religionists the Italian-Americans. A majority of them are related ancestrally to agrarian villages in southern Italy, and they have reinforced a "village mentality," a sense of insularity and regularity, an affinity for the familiar and strong family ties.

Edward Iannielli is a retired ironworker who worked on the Verrazano in the early nineteen-sixties. He is now sixty-seven, and lives in Amityville, Long Island. I first met him as a grieving man of twenty-seven, in 1963, weeks after he had briefly clung to, and then lost hold of, the dangling body of a co-worker named Gerard McKee, who fell into the Narrows from a cable more than three hundred and fifty feet high, hitting the water with such force that he immediately lost his life. Although Iannielli was haunted by the experience, he remained on the job until the bridge was completed, and later he was engaged in the construction of some fifty high-rise office buildings in the New York metropolitan area, and other projects as well, until he decided to retire, in 1991. A religious man who regularly attends Mass, Iannielli believes that everyday events are instilled with a special meaning, and he thought it inevitable that he would cap his thirty-six-year career by ending up on the Verrazano, joining forty fellow-workers in removing rust from the towers and cables—a task that, along with old, sad memories, would bring him renewed feelings of personal pride and professional achievement.

He was fifty-five years old when he returned to work on the bridge, that summer. His back was in pain—he suffered from sciatica—and his left hand had a missing index finger, a permanently bent middle finger, and a fourth finger cut off at the knuckle, all the result of work-related accidents. He wore a faded brown hard hat, his much travelled tool belt, bluejeans, and one of his many paint-stained sweatshirts. He also wore a new, expensive pair of calf-high soft leather boots with rubber soles and no heels, boots he fondly regarded as stumble-proof good-luck boots, the last pair he would ever wear while traversing the beam of a bridge.

Despite his advanced age and his occupational ailments, Edward Iannielli had drawn one of the most difficult assignments on the renovation project—that of removing rust from the highest points of the towers. His height (five feet seven inches) and his weight (a hundred and forty pounds) meant that he would not put undue stress on quarter-inch galvanized cable, which he would be required to climb, more than five hundred feet to the tower tops. One morning, Iannielli stepped out onto the lower ledge of the tower on the Brooklyn side overlooking the upper deck of the roadway, two hundred and forty feet above the water, and eased himself down into a squarish silver metal container that was attached to a cable; while his right hand held onto the rail of the container, he used his left hand to press the "up" lever that activated the electrical motor lodged in the base of the container, directly beneath his floor space. After arriving at the top of the tower—a journey that took twenty minutes—he leaned out into the sky and went to work with wire brushes and scrapers to remove rust, and then, wearing rubber gloves, to smear a rust-resistant paste onto whatever corrosion existed along the flat surface and bolts of the tower. As he did this, he envisaged himself thirty years earlier, inserting these same bolts into the same steel, and once more he felt a sense of identity with the great structure. Tears came to his eyes, and, dipping his gloved left hand into a bucket of reddish paste, he reached out to touch an untarnished plate of steel which was secured by a row of bolts and, with his bent middle finger, he wrote as clearly as he could, in block letters, "Catherine"—the name of his wife of thirty years, who had recently died of cancer.



From this vantage point, he could see, extending for miles, the variegated shapes and shades of the city: the verdant parks and tree-lined highways, the smokestacks, the church steeples, the row houses, the apartment buildings, and the skyscrapers—the taller they were, the more familiar he was with them. If helping to build the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge had been the most gratifying job of his life, then the low point had occurred between 1968 and 1971, when he was employed as a worker at the World Trade Center. It has never been in his nature to be critical of designers and engineers, and he was reluctant to speak negatively about the World Trade Center, particularly now that the site had become something of a shrine. However, Iannielli

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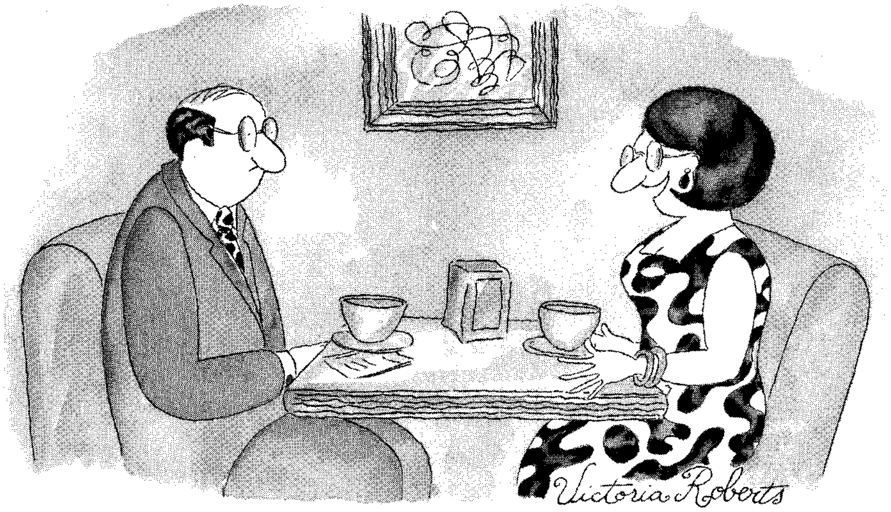


"Was there ever a Boy Scout badge for 'caution'?"

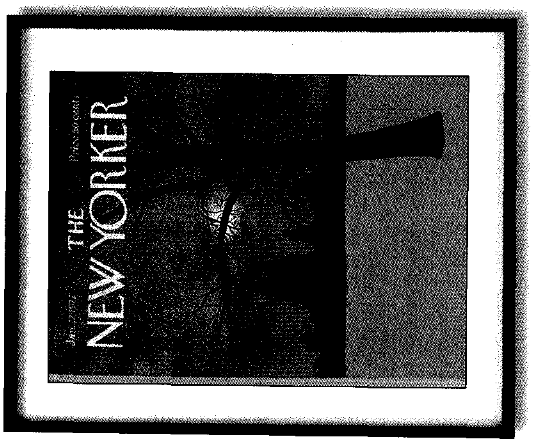
• •

told me that during the three years of its construction he and most of his co-workers were appalled by the lightness of the floor beams they were directed to connect, by the seeming fragility of the entire structure, and by the hasty pace that they were ordered to follow in adding to the New York skyline two tubular towers that suggested a pair of elongated birdcages.

"Flimsy" was how Iannielli characterized the construction of the World Trade Center during one of our conversations. A day later, he called to say that he regretted using the word, fearing that it made him sound insensitive to the events of September 11th. But I reminded him that his feelings had already been expressed by several other workers I had spoken to, many of them Verrazano veterans. I told him that "flimsy" had also been used in a recent speech delivered at Stanford University by Ronald O. Hamburger, a member of a team of structural engineers that was assessing the performance of the Twin Towers during the terrorist attacks, the ensuing fires, and, ultimately, the collapse. "The floor trusses were relatively flimsy. As the towers collapsed, the trusses just fell apart," Hamburger said. Other engineers had also pointed out that the entire complex was about ninety-five per cent "air," that it had been designed without interior columns, for maximum rentable floor space and flexibility; and that this explained why the rubble in the wake of the collapse was only a few stories high. "We didn't find much concrete in there," a hardhat worker who was among the volunteers removing the debris told me. "It was mostly powder, dust—mounds of dust."

Edward Iannielli remembers his working days on the construction of the World Trade Center as a dispiriting time. It was an era of conflict in which student antiwar demonstrators and various counterculturists presumed to occupy the moral high ground in New York and elsewhere, while hardhat unionists like him, patriotic traditionalists opposed to the desecration of the flag, were frequently depicted in the media as reactionary riffraff or worse.

One day in early May of 1970, Iannielli recalled, a melee broke out near Wall Street involving crowds of antiwar activists and dozens of workers who had followed them there. Iannielli had not accompanied the angry construction workers, but when they returned they told him that they had beaten up many demonstrators and had destroyed countless antiwar banners. They had also stormed City Hall and forced Mayor John Lindsay to raise the flag on the roof to full staff, infuriating the antiwar faction that had persuaded the Mayor to lower it in memory of the Kent State marchers who had been killed by Ohio National Guardsmen, earlier in the week. "When I think of the World Trade Center, I think of all the hostility, all the bad feel-



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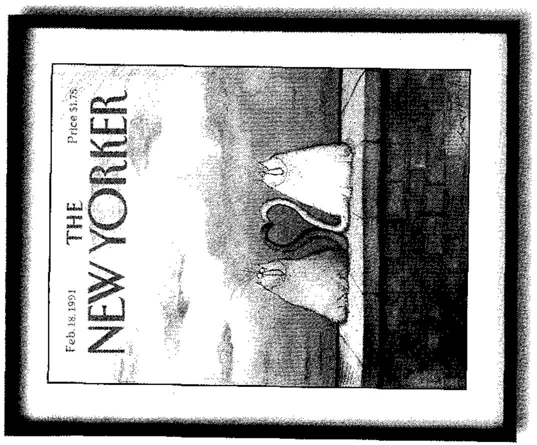

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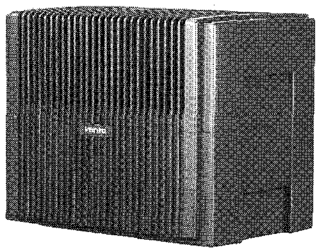

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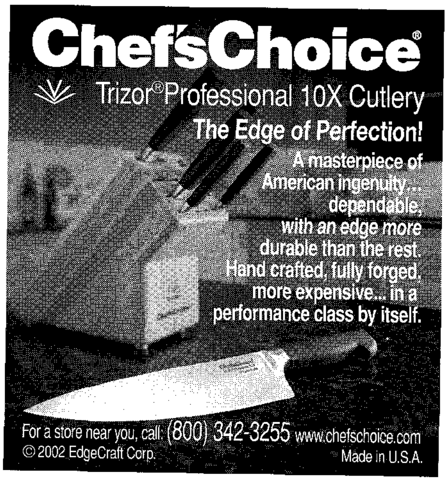

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PROFILES

THE LONG WAR OF JOHN KERRY

Can a Massachusetts Brahmin become President?

BY JOE KLEIN

On a rainy October morning, the day after Senator John Forbes Kerry, of Massachusetts, announced that he would reluctantly vote to give President George W. Bush the authority to use lethal force against Iraq, the Senator sat in his Capitol Hill office reminiscing about another war and another speech. The war was Vietnam. The speech was one he had delivered upon graduating from Yale, in 1966. Kerry was twenty-two at the time; he had already enlisted in the Navy. As one of Yale's champion debaters and president of the Political Union, he had been selected to deliver the Class Oration, traditionally an Ivy-draped nostalgia piece. But the speech he gave, hastily rewritten at the last moment, was anything but traditional: it was a broad, passionate criticism of American foreign policy, including the war that he would soon be fighting.

I'd been trying to get a copy of this speech for several weeks, but Kerry's staff had been unable to find one. There seemed a parallel—at least, a convenient journalistic analogy—to his statement the day before about Iraq: two questionable wars, both of which Kerry had decided to support, conditionally, even as he raised serious doubts about their propriety.

Kerry bristled at the analogy. He assumed that a familiar accusation was inherent in the comparison: that he was guilty of speaking boldly but acting politically. And it is true that from his earliest days in public life—a career that seems to have begun in prep school—even John Kerry's closest friends have teased him about his overactive sense of destiny, his theatrical sense of gravitas, and his initials, which are the same as John Fitzgerald Kennedy's. "I signed up for the Navy in 1965, the year before the Class Oration," Kerry said now, with quiet vehemence. He repeated it, for emphasis: "I signed up for the *Navy*. There was very little thought of Vietnam. It seemed very far away. There was no connection between my decision to serve and the speech I made."

But there was a connection, of sorts. Kerry had made the decision along with three close friends, classmates and fellow-members of Yale's not so secret society, Skull and Bones: David Thorne, Richard Pershing, and Frederick Smith. All came from families with strong traditions of military and public service. Pershing was the grandson of General John Pershing, the commander of the American Expeditionary Force in the First World War. (Richard Pershing was killed during the Tet offensive.) "Our decisions were all about our sense of duty," Fred Smith, who went on to found Federal Express, recalls. "We were the Kennedy generation—you know, 'Pay any price, bear any burden.' That was the ethos."

The week before John Kerry delivered the Class Oration, the fifteen Skull and Bones seniors went off on a final jaunt together to a fishing camp on an island in the St. Lawrence River. Fred Smith remembers spending the days idly, playing cards and drinking beer. David Thorne, however, says that there was a serious running discussion about Vietnam. "There were four of us going to war in a matter of months. That tends to concentrate the mind. This may have been the first time we really seriously began to question Vietnam. It was: 'Hey, what the hell is going on over there? What the hell are we in for?' "

Kerry's reaction to these discussions was intense and precipitate. He decided to rewrite the speech. His original address, which can still be found in the 1966 Yale yearbook, was "rather sophomoric," he recalled. "I decided that I couldn't give that speech. I couldn't get up there and go through that claptrap. I remember there was no electricity in the cabin. I remember staying up with a candle writing my speech in the wee hours of the night, rewriting and rewriting. It reflected what I felt and what we were all thinking about. It got an incredible reception, a standing ovation."

The Senator and I were sitting in wing chairs in his office, which is rather more elegant than those of his peers—the walls painted Chinese red with a dark lacquer glaze and covered with nineteenth-century nautical prints. There is a marble fireplace, a couch, a coffee table, the wing chairs: in sum, a room with a distinct sensibility, a reserved and private place. Kerry seemed weary. Our conversation was interrupted, from time to time, by phone calls from his supporters—most of whom seemed unhappy about his Iraq vote. At one point, he had to rush over to the Senate chamber to vote on another issue. When he returned, we began to talk about his time in Vietnam. He served as the captain of a small "swift boat," ferrying troops up the rivers of the Mekong Delta. He was wounded three times in four months, and then sent home—the policy in Vietnam was three wounds and you're out. He received a Bronze Star, for saving the life of a Special Forces lieutenant who had fallen overboard during a firefight, and a Silver Star. The latter, a medal awarded only for significant acts of courage, was the result of a three-boat counterattack Kerry had led against a Vietcong position on a riverbank. He had chased down, shot, and killed a man that day. The man had been carrying a B-40 rocket-propelled grenade launcher. "You want to see what one of those can do to a boat?" he asked. "A couple of weeks after I left Vietnam, a swift boat captained by my close friend Don Droz—we called him Dinky—got hit with a B-40. He was killed. I still have the photo here somewhere."

Kerry began to rummage around his desk and eventually pulled out a manila folder. "Here it is," he said. The boat was mangled beyond recognition. "Oh my, look at this!" He held up a sheaf of yellowed, double-spaced, typewritten pages. It looked like an old college term paper,

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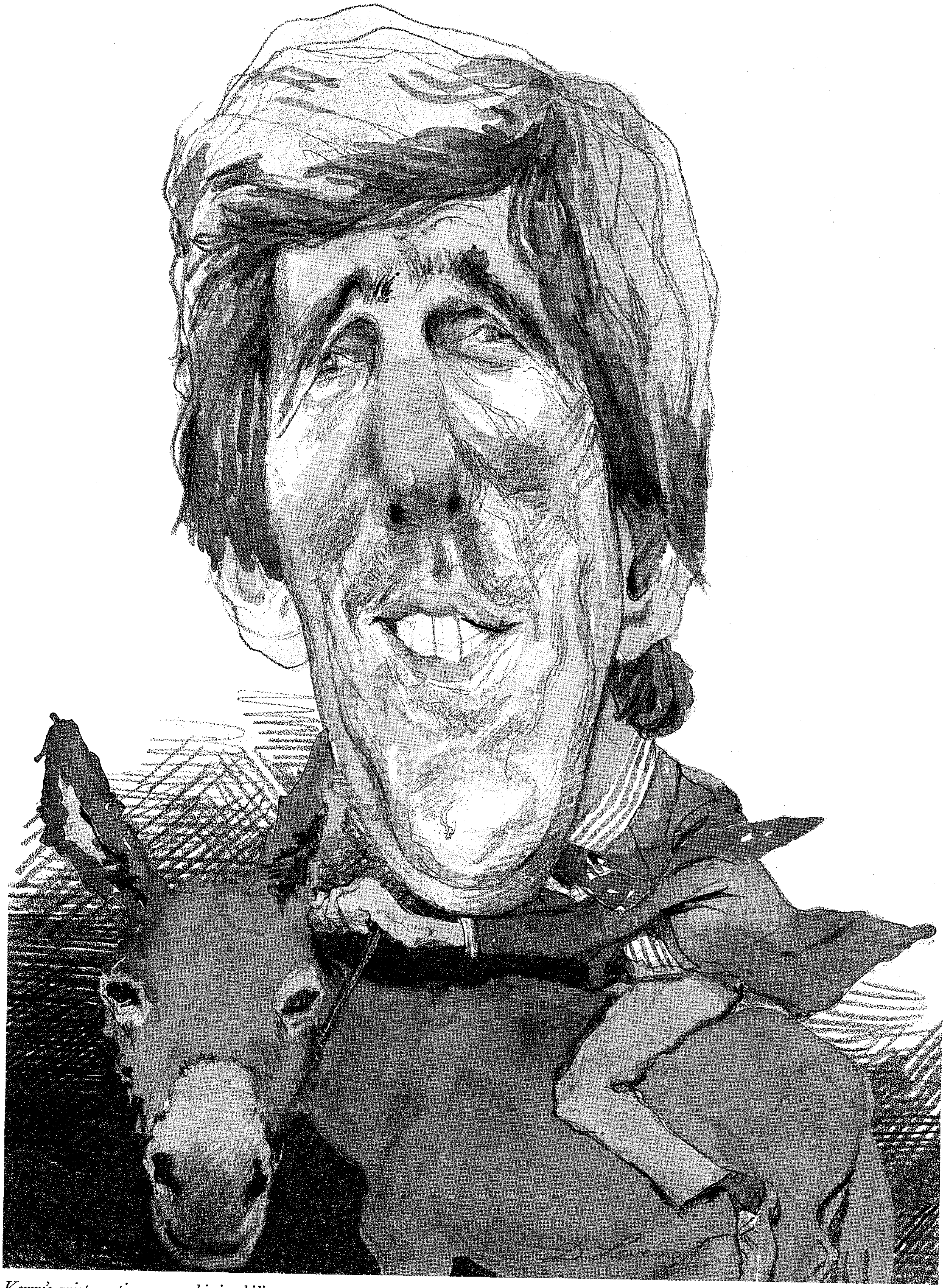


Kerry's aristocratic reserve, his inability to pose as a populist, is not a quality recently associated with successful Presidential campaigns.

taken from a three-ring binder. "It's the original copy of my Class Oration. What on earth is it doing here?"

He sat down again and studied the speech, transfixed. Then he began to read it aloud, curious, nostalgic, embarrassed by, and yet impressed with, his undergraduate eloquence. He read several pages. Worried looks passed between the two staff members who were in the room: Was he going to read the whole damn thing? " 'It is misleading to mention right and wrong in this issue, for to every thinking man, the semantics of this contest often find the United States right in its wrongness and wrong in its rightness,' " he read, swiftly, without oratorical flourish. " 'Neither am I arguing against the war itself. . . . I am criticizing the propensity—the ease—which the United States has for getting into this kind of situation—' "

He stopped and looked up, shaking his head, "Boy, was I a sophisticated nabob!" The two staff members exhaled. "You have to laugh at this now. . . . Do I even want this out?"

But he continued reading, unable to stop himself. He skipped several pages in the middle, then recited the entire peroration.

The Class Oration says a lot about John Kerry, who will soon announce his intention to run for President of the United States. It is a nuanced assessment of American foreign policy at a crossroads—delivered at a moment when the political leaders of the country should have been questioning basic assumptions but weren't. Kerry did, however—a year before the antiwar movement began to gather strength and coherence. The speech was notable for its central thesis: "The United States must . . . bring itself to understand that the policy of intervention"—against Communism—"that was right for Western Europe does not and cannot find the same application to the rest of the world."

Kerry went on:

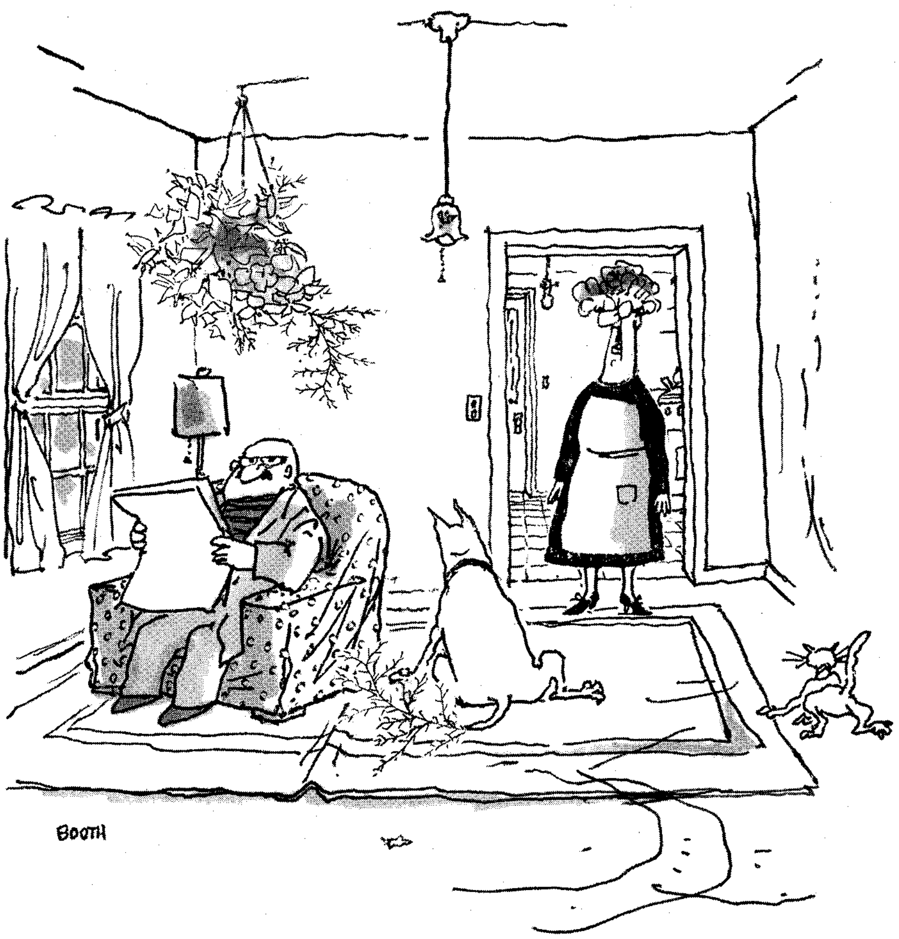
> In most emerging nations, the spectre of imperialist capitalism stirs as much fear and hatred as that of communism. To compound the problem, we continue to push forward our will only as we see it and in a fashion that only leads to more mistakes and deeper commitment. Where we should have instructed, it seems we did not; where we should have been patient, it seems we were not; where we should have stayed clear, it seems we would not. . . . Never in the last twenty years has the government of the United States been as isolated as it is today.

There is, nonetheless, something slightly off-putting about the speech. The portentous quality, the hijacking of Kennedyesque tics and switchbacks ("Where we should have instructed . . ."), the absence of irony, the absence of any sort of joy—all these rankle, and in a familiar way. This has been the knock against John Kerry for the past thirty years, ever since he captured the nation's attention as the spokesman for Vietnam Veterans Against the War, a group whose members staged a dramatic protest in Washington in April of 1971, camping out on the Mall and tossing their medals and combat ribbons onto the Capitol steps.

He seemed the world's oldest twenty-seven-year-old that week, even though he was dressed in scruffy combat fatigues, his extravagant thatch of black hair gleaming, flopping over his ears and eyebrows—he looked a bit like the pre-hallucinogenic George Harrison. Kerry spoke to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in much the same style as he'd spoken at Yale. His testimony was brilliant and succinct: "How do you ask a man to be the last man to die in Vietnam? How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake?"

He was an immediate celebrity. He was also an immediate target of the Nixon Administration. Years later, Chuck Colson—who was Nixon's political enforcer—told me, "He was a thorn in our flesh. He was very articulate, a credible leader of the opposition. He forced us to create a counterfoil. We found a vet named John O'Neill and formed a group called Vietnam Veterans for a Just Peace. We had O'Neill meet the President, and we did everything we could do to boost his group."

Kerry launched a national speaking tour; he spoke to the National Baptist Convention, was named an honorary member of the United Auto Workers, and spoke on campuses across the country. He was the subject of a "60 Minutes"



"Harold, have you reaped huge gains that you have not told me about?"

profile. Morley Safer asked him if he wanted to be President of the United States. "No," he said with a chuckle, after an instant's surprise and calculation.

Serious as all this was—he was, for a moment, as Colson suggests, the most compelling leader of the antiwar movement—there was something uneasy, and perhaps even faintly risible, about it, too, particularly the ill-disguised Kennedy playacting. Even as Kerry delivered his Senate testimony, he distorted his natural speech to sound more like that earlier J.F.K.; for example, he occasionally "ahsked" questions. (Kerry had befriended Robert F. Kennedy's speechwriter Adam Walinsky and consulted him about the speech, bouncing phrases and ideas off the old master.) This sort of thing had been a source of merriment for his classmates ever since prep school, where the joke was that his initials really stood for "Just For Kerry." He had volunteered to work on Edward Kennedy's 1962 Senate campaign, had dated Janet Auchincloss, who was Jacqueline Kennedy's half sister, had hung out at Hammersmith Farm, the Auchincloss family's estate in Newport, and had gone sailing with the President. A practical joke—one of many, apparently—was played on him in the 1966 Yale yearbook: he was listed as a member of the Young Republicans. After his 1971 antiwar début in Washington, his fellow-Yalie Garry Trudeau lampooned him in the "Doonesbury" comic strip.

The jokes have never really abated. William Bulger, a state senator from South Boston and the dean of that city's clever politicians, nicknamed Kerry Live Shot, for his homing instinct when it came to television cameras. Indeed, Kerry's every move—the fact that he tossed his combat ribbons, not his medals, onto the Capitol steps; the fact that he had corrective jaw surgery (to fix a clicking sound, which had been compounded by a hockey injury); the fact, most recently, that he married the wealthy widow Teresa Heinz, whose late husband, Senator H. John Heinz III, was an heir to the ketchup fortune—all these were assumed to be political and were subjected to ridicule. "We were pretty rough on him over the years," Martin Nolan, a recently retired member of the Boston *Globe's* mostly Irish and extremely raucous stable of political writers, says. "He was an empty suit, he was Live Shot, he never passed a mirror without saying hello."

Indeed, John Kerry has always looked as if he had been requisitioned from central casting: preposterously dignified, profoundly vertical. He is six feet four inches tall, and his narrow frame, long face, and sloping shoulders make him seem even taller. His face is a collection of strong features that inaccurately suggest an Irish heritage, as does his name: his father's family was mostly from Austria. He has a practically endless jaw, a prominent nose, and eyebrows that hang like a set of quotation marks beside grayish-blue eyes. And then there is the hair, which is so melodramatically profuse and puffy that it seems an encumbrance almost too weighty for his long, thin neck.

"He's cursed to look like that," says Bob Kerrey, the president of New School University, who served with Kerry in the Senate and is a fellow combat veteran of Vietnam. "His looks say something about him that is different from what he actually is. He's very easy to hang out with. There isn't an excessive use of the pronoun 'I.' There's a genuine person there, a very approachable person, a very honorable person." Other friends reflexively assume a defensive posture when describing him: He's not the loner that he once was, he's not as aloof, he's more comfortable than he used to be, he's grown as a person—although people have been saying these sorts of things about him, especially at election time, for the past twenty years.

Kerry's aristocratic reserve, his utter inability to pose as a populist, is not a quality recently associated with successful candidates for President of the United States. His voice and manner are cultured, Brahmin; he seems the sort of person who might ask for a "splash" of coffee, as George H. W. Bush did, to his political embarrassment, at a truck stop during the 1988 campaign. That Kerry is a Massachusetts liberal does not recommend him highly, either: the last three such candidates were Ted Kennedy, Paul Tsongas, and Michael Dukakis, and the latter's campaign has become shorthand for the disastrously effete, National Public Radio tendencies of the Democratic Party. Kerry has consistently voted for gun control, for abortion rights, and for environmental protection, and has opposed the death penalty; he has voted with Kennedy about ninety-six per cent of the time.

"But it's important to look at that other four per cent," David McKean, his chief of staff, says. Kerry does tend to be more fiscally conservative than Kennedy. He was one of the first Democrats to sign on to the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings balanced-budget proposals of the eighties; he favors free trade; he voted for welfare reform; he has even, on occasion, delivered speeches that raised questions about such bedrock liberal dogma as affirmative action and guaranteed tenure for public-school teachers.

His great strength is his mastery of foreign affairs and military policy. His willingness to criticize the Bush Administration on these subjects has distinguished him from the other eminent Democrats who wandered the country during the recent election season, hoping to make a Presidential impression on the Party faithful. In fact, he often derided "a new conventional wisdom of consultants, pollsters, and strategists who argue . . . that Democrats should be the party of domestic issues only."

Kerry's criticism of the Bush foreign policy is meticulous and comprehensive. It begins with the Administration's gratuitously ideological diplomatic actions in the year before the September 11th terrorist attacks. On Bush's decision to simply walk away from the Kyoto global-warming treaty, for example, he told me, "One hundred and sixty nations spent ten years working to get to a certain place and the United States just stands up and dismisses it out of hand. The Administration doesn't say we're going to try to fix it, doesn't say we respect your work, doesn't say we're going to try to find the common ground where we do have some differences. It just declares it dead. Now, what do we think those presidents of those countries, those prime ministers and those finance ministers, those environmental ministers are? Are they all dumb? Are we telling them they are absolutely incapable of making judgments about science, that the ten years of work that they've invested in conference after conference, many of which I attended, was absolutely for naught? That makes us friends in the world?"

Kerry extends this argument beyond the usual liberal critique: the unilateralist approach, he says, damages America's ability to do the intelligence gathering and wage the unconventional warfare that are at the heart of an effective campaign against terrorists and rogue states. He is critical of both the Clinton and Bush Administrations for their uncertain, and too frequently unsubtle, use of American power. Although he voted against the Gulf War in 1991, he has supported military action against Iraq in the years since—indeed, he was a co-sponsor of the resolution that threatened force against Iraq in 1998, when Saddam Hussein sent the United Nations weapons inspectors home. But he is a critic of the Pentagon's old-fashioned Cold War doctrine of overwhelming air power, its overcautious use of ground troops, and its skepticism about the efficacy of unconventional war-fighting assets, like the Special Forces. Early on, he criticized the Bush Administration for its tactics in Afghanistan, its slapdash and unsuccessful effort to trap the Al Qaeda leadership at Tora Bora—and particularly its decision not to use American troops to surround the mountain redoubt. "When given the opportunity to destroy Al Qaeda, the President turned not to the best military in the history of man," he said in July, "but rather turned to Afghan warlords who only a week earlier were on the other side."

Kerry's foreign policy seems a muscular multilateralism: active, detailed engagement with the countries in the Middle East and elsewhere; less pompous rhetoric and more of the patient scut work—the diplomatic consultation, the building of direct relationships with local intelligence and police agencies—that will make an occasional use of force by America more palatable. There is an implication that much of the Bush Administration's bombast has been for domestic political consumption, an attempt to sound tougher than Bill Clinton did. "The Administration mistakes tough rhetoric for tough policy," Kerry told me. "They may gain short-term domestic advantage as a result, but they are damaging the long-term security of the country. This is a far more complicated world than the ideologues of the Administration care about or understand."

Finally, Kerry broadens his practical critique of Bush's foreign policy to add some vision. Specifically, he says that the President missed an opportunity, in the weeks after September 11th, to call the nation to a larger cause: energy independence. In October of 2001, Kerry proposed a concerted energy-conservation campaign, including higher fuel-efficiency standards in automobiles and a "Manhattan Project" to develop renewable sources of energy. "No American son or daughter should ever again be sent abroad to die for oil," he often says on the stump, invariably to ovations from the Democratic faithful.

This is a complicated message, and—except for the one sound bite—a difficult one to deliver at a political rally. But Kerry's knowledge and conviction, and the fact that his words sound different from the market-tested slogans that other Democrats were rehearsing this autumn, gave him a credibility that his competitors in the larval Presidential race were missing. For the first time in his career, he didn't seem precocious. "I think he's had a hell of a year," James Carville, the political strategist, said. "Why? Because he's actually saying something. People do notice that, you know. The other thing is, 9/11 made the Commander-in-Chief part of the Presidency important again, and that's helped him, too, because of his military background. And, finally, he's not conflicted about this. He's not testing the waters. He's immersed in the waters. He's growing gills."

In late September, Kerry went to Charleston, South Carolina—the site of the first Southern primary in 2004 and a newly crucial state in the Presidential process—to campaign for Phil Leventis, the Democratic candidate for lieutenant governor. Leventis served as a pilot during the Gulf War, and various veterans' groups had gathered to announce their support for him. It was a perfect, cloudless Saturday. Kerry and Leventis stood in Marion Square, posed before a carefully arranged group of Vietnam combat veterans, most of whom wore blue knit shirts and boonie hats. Kerry gave a short but passionate speech about the service and sacrifice of the vets, about the Bush Administration's attempt to stint on some promised benefits. But he was speaking into a void. There was no audience. There was a single television camera, standing like a scarecrow in an empty field.

The real business of the day was transacted afterward. Kerry mingled easily with the vets, who were mostly African-American; he cussed and joked and talked about places like Da Nang and Da Lat. A pink-faced overweight man approached. "I'm Jim Gunn," he said to Kerry. "Do you remember me?"

Kerry nodded warily. Gunn was the leader of the Coalition of Retired Military Veterans and had attacked Senator John McCain during the 2000 Republican Presidential primary in South Carolina. Kerry had written a letter protesting the charges that another veterans' group had made against McCain—essentially, that McCain was "anti-veteran"—and he had got the other Vietnam combat veterans in the Senate to sign it. Now Jim Gunn said to him, "I just want you to know, Senator, that you were right about McCain and I was wrong. Bush lied to my face, and I'll never support him again." Gunn proceeded to file a bill of particulars against the President on veterans' issues. Then he sighed and said, "I wish there was a machine that could really say when someone is telling the truth, but you sound sincere when you talk about our issues. I represent seventeen thousand vets in South Carolina—I'm like their union boss—and if you run for President next time we're with you."

The scene was a striking reversal from the first time I'd seen Kerry campaign—in 1972, when he ran for Congress from a district that centered on the old mill towns, like Lawrence and Lowell, north of Boston. Crowds were easy in those days, especially crowds of young people; the Kerry campaign was a portable protest march. But the candidate didn't spend much time trying to find common ground with older veterans, like Jim Gunn, who still favored the war, and their enmity was a factor in his eventual defeat. In fact, Kerry was a fairly awful candidate, if I remember correctly—stiff, pompous, delivering the functional equivalent of his Senate testimony to elderly Portuguese shoe workers worried about their jobs and looking for some human contact. "That sounds right," Kerry told me recently. "If there's a balance like this in politics"—he held his two hands evenly in front of him—"issues over here and personal politics over here, I came into this business heavily on the issues side. I wanted to end the war." He raised his right hand and lowered his left. "I never had a mentor. I never worked beside a Tip O'Neill, I didn't have a Honey Fitz," he said, referring to the late Speaker of the House and to John Kennedy's grandfather. "I just came from a different place. I had to learn by making mistakes."

Kerry had won a tough Democratic primary that year and coasted, ten points ahead, into what seemed an easy election campaign against an unknown Republican named Paul Cronin. But he neglected to do his homework with the ancient, feudal Democratic Party organizations in the mill towns—that was considered the "old" politics—and the Lowell *Sun* launched a withering assault against him. "It was an overwhelming feeling of powerlessness," he says now. "There was nothing we could do to reverse it."

By all accounts, the loss was devastating. It was the first deviation from the career trajectory he had imagined for himself in prep school. "He came to my home in New Hampshire that weekend," his friend George Butler, a documentary filmmaker who was then a freelance photographer, recalls. "He wouldn't say a word to anyone. He sat there Friday night and built an entire model ship from scratch. On Saturday, he and I climbed a mountain together. He still wasn't talking. At the top of the mountain, I took a picture of him—I must have taken five thousand pictures of him over the years, but that was one of the best. He was the most despondent-looking human being I had ever seen."

Kerry has never been the most sociable fellow. He grew up lonely: his father was a foreign-service officer who was rarely home; his mother was a member of the aristocratic Forbes family—they made their fortune in the China trade—but she was one of eleven siblings and the fortune had been subdivided into insignificance by the time John Kerry's generation came along. He was brought up among the wealthy, but his was a threadbare, erstwhile aristocracy. There were many houses, most of them other people's houses: in Brittany (a Forbes family estate, where his mother had spent much of her youth); on Naushon Island, just off Cape Cod (another Forbes retreat); in Washington; in Groton, Massachusetts. He had been sent to boarding school in Switzerland, and hated it (he speaks fluent French and some Italian). He was then sent to boarding school in the United States, to St. Paul's, in Concord, New Hampshire. He was one of a handful of Catholic students; they were sent to Mass on Sunday in a taxi.

In one of our conversations, I asked Kerry how he became interested in politics. His interest was a result, he replied, of seeing the impact of the war in Europe as a child. "My very first memory—I was three years old—is holding my mother's hand and she was crying, and I didn't know why, as we walked through the broken glass and rubble of her childhood house in France, which the Germans had used as a headquarters and then bombed and burned as they left. I remember a staircase going up into the sky, and I remember a chimney into the sky. Those were the two images—that was all that was left. I remember going to the beach at Normandy on a subsequent trip, in 1951, and seeing burned-out landing vehicles, and the bunkers, and playing in those bunkers. And then we lived in Berlin for a brief period of time, with the Communists right on the other side of the sector. The Cold War was very real to me, more so than for most people my age."

There were constant policy discussions, and guests from the diplomatic community, at the dinner table; for Kerry, talking politics was the best way to communicate with his father. "John grew up in Europe, as I did," David Thorne, his friend from Yale, says. "He grew up around a lot of fancy people, as I did. But I think he grew up very much alone, and it showed. He rubbed a lot of people in school the wrong way—but then it was rare to see someone so intent on a career in public service at such a young age." Indeed, many of Kerry's friends joke that he was acting as if he were President in high school.

These days, the Senator is quite conscious of that ever-earnest image. "Look, I was a very serious guy except for when I was a non-serious guy," he said. "I knew how to have a lot of fun, sometimes too much. There were plenty of times when

"Omigod. The entire axis of boring is in there."

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I was disengaged, frivolous, four sheets to the wind on a weekend." (Kerry has admitted to smoking marijuana a few times, but, sadly, he claims to have been bothered by the smoke.)

"We did do some wild things together—flying planes, running with the bulls in Pamplona," Thorne recalls. "He was very gutsy, always pushing—let's do this, let's do that." Kerry's physical daring—as a skier, a windsurfer, a motorcycle rider, a stunt pilot—remains a source of wonder among his friends. He was, apparently, something of a cowboy in Vietnam as well. His old crewmates remember that he played rock music over the boat's loudspeaker system—the Doors, the Stones, Jimi Hendrix—before they went on patrol. "He starred in that Marlon Brando movie, 'Apocalypse Now,' long before they ever made it," Gene Thorson, a former crewmate, says.

To release the tension after a trip up the river, Kerry would often instigate chicken races between the swift boats, cutting over each other's wakes. He also organized water-balloon battles. Once, his three-boat squadron attacked an American supply ship at night with flares. "The brass was not too happy about that," Kerry recalled. "But what were they going to do to us, send us to Vietnam?"

Admiral Elmo Zumwalt later joked that he wasn't sure if he should give Kerry the Silver Star or court-martial him for his actions on February 28, 1969. Kerry had ignored standard operating procedure as his squadron ferried troops up the river that day. "He had talked to me about trying something different," Mike Medeiros, a crew member from San Leandro, California, said. "He said he was tired of just going up the river and getting shot at. He asked me what I thought about turning to attack the enemy positions if we took fire and no one was hurt. I said it might not be a bad idea."

If he turned his boats toward the shore, Kerry believed, he would transform a long, horizontal target into a narrower, vertical one. "It would concentrate both of our machine guns directly on the point of fire and surprise the hell out of them," and it would keep the twenty soldiers each boat was carrying astern out of the line of fire, Kerry recalled. "When the firing began, I gave the order to turn and—*phoom!*—we just went in and beached and took them by complete surprise, and we routed them and we didn't take a wound."

As Kerry's boat crashed ashore, a lone Vietcong stood up holding a B-40 rocket-propelled grenade launcher. "When he first stood up, he froze, because he didn't expect to see us staring him in the face, literally ten yards away." The man was wounded by one of Kerry's crewmates and began to run; Kerry leaped off the boat and chased him. "I didn't want to let him get away. I didn't want him to run away and turn around with an active B-40 and take us out. There but for the grace of God . . . The guy could have pulled the trigger and I wouldn't be here today."

It has been widely, and inaccurately, reported that Kerry filmed this and other actions with an 8-mm. movie camera. The films were in fact mostly travelogues and clowning-around shots on the boat. More than a few other vets recorded their adventures in Vietnam. "We did it for our families," Kerry told me. "We wanted to have a record of where we'd been. We wanted them to know what it had been like if we got killed."

As always, however, there was a sense that Kerry saw these home movies as part of a larger, more heroic film. "He was very much aware of the stage," David Thorne says. "He knew that his actions in Vietnam might have some bearing on his future life. But none of us could anticipate the impact—the psychological trauma—the war would have on us. John's been able to live with the demons of combat, but they are there and they've given his life shape and meaning in a way that he never anticipated." Thorne went on, "In a way, it was harder coming back than being there. You know, we got home, and it was, 'What the fuck was that all about?' Vietnam Veterans Against the War was one big T-group. People like Jane Fonda wanted to make it into a political movement, but all we wanted to do was hug each other."

The second reel of John Kerry's Heroic Life Story, the twenty years from 1972 to 1992, turned out to be somewhat less heroic than the protagonist might have hoped. His celebrity evaporated with the congressional defeat in 1972. But the residue of the war remained—he had nightmares, at times so intense that he'd wake up screaming, leap out of bed, and slam into walls—and there was now a life to be constructed. Kerry didn't abandon his political dream, but he revised it prosaically: he would pay his dues. He went to Boston College law school; he became an assistant district attorney in the Middlesex County District Attorney's office. He built a reputation as a successful prosecutor, raised money for other Democrats, and waited for his moment.

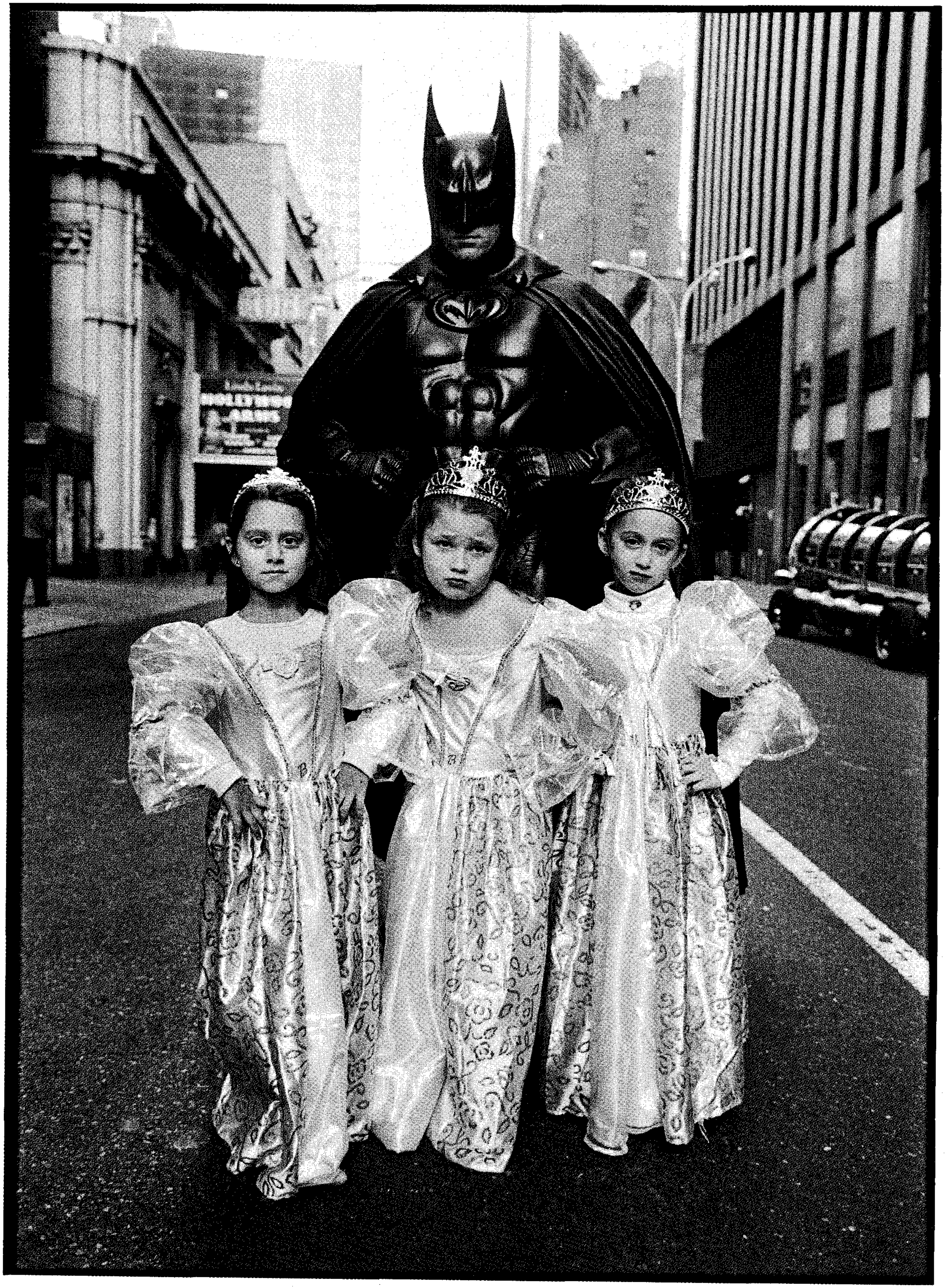
In 1970, Kerry had married David Thorne's twin sister, Julia; they had two daughters, born in 1973 and 1976. According to friends, Julia was not a typical political wife. "There were times at dinner parties when John would be very pompous, unable to control his impulse to make a speech," one acquaintance said. "It was all slightly laughable, and Julia was one of those who laughed. She'd say things like, 'What the fuck did you just say?' "

Kerry is understandably loath to talk about the details of the marriage; his reticence is compounded by the fact that Julia was suffering from severe depression. She eventually wrote a book about the illness, called "You Are Not Alone." It began:

> February 1980, five months after my thirty-sixth birthday, my mind ravaged by corroding voices, my body defeated by bone-rattling panics, I sat on the edge of my bed minutes from taking my life. . . . I could no longer pretend I was of use to my husband or my children. . . . I knew that, once I was gone, my family and friends would be relieved of the burden of my incompetency.

They separated in 1982, after Kerry decided to run for lieutenant governor of Massachusetts. Julia's mental condition was precarious, but Kerry chose to push ahead with the race. "When I get focussed and set out to do something, I'm pretty good at staying focussed," Kerry told me. "You don't want to let yourself down, you know what I'm saying? One loss is enough. You don't have to screw up everything else." He went on to say that there were days during the campaign when he and Julia would have wrenching morning discussions about their children and their future living arrangements, "and then, in the afternoon, I'd have to put on a smiling face and say, 'Hi, I'm John Kerry, I'd like you to vote for me,' and I'd feel empty inside doing it. It was not an easy process."

David Thorne calls the separation "an



COSTUME PARTY *Forty-eighth Street between Sixth and Seventh Avenues, November, 2002. Photograph by Mary Ellen Mark.*

"Quit parentalizing me!"

extended psychodrama." There were, apparently, several attempts to reconcile, but the divorce became final in 1988. Julia is now living in Montana.

John Kerry's first two statewide election campaigns, for lieutenant governor, in 1982, and, two years later, for United States senator, were successful, but not exactly triumphant. He was a more personable campaigner than he'd been in 1972; he worked hard, debated well, raised money relentlessly (and he had to spend more time raising it than most, because he refused to take contributions from political-action committees), but he was accepted only grudgingly by the state's Democratic Party establishment. "He was yesterday's hero, and he was frustrated by the fact that, every time he ran, the liberals would find some other darling," a close associate says. "In 1982, it was a woman, Evelyn Murphy, whom Michael Dukakis wanted as his running mate. In 1984, it was Jim Shannon."

Shannon was the sort of candidate the Boston *Globe* loved: blue-collar background, a member of Congress, charming, a Tip O'Neill protégé. The primary contest was brutal. "He was not a very likable guy," Shannon recalls of Kerry. "But he knew how to run a statewide campaign and I didn't. There were no real differences between us on the issues."

Kerry was so distressed by the newspaper coverage that he invited the *Globe's* editor, Michael Janeway, to breakfast after the election. "He wanted to know why we were so rough on him," Janeway recalled. "I reminded him about Sam Rayburn's classic political categories. I said, 'John, there are workhorses and show horses, and I guess our staff considers you a show horse.' "

Ted Kennedy, who has now served as a United States senator from Massachusetts for forty years, is both a workhorse and a show horse. He dominates the Senate's domestic-policy agenda, but he has also come to be considered, in his old age, something of a card. He is a devilish tease—and, according to Senate colleagues, John Kerry has been a perfect pigeon. "Their relationship is good, far better than it was with Kerry's predecessor, Paul Tsongas," a former Kennedy aide said. "In fact, Kerry has been very skillful when it comes to playing Teddy. But Teddy sure knows how to torture John."

A few weeks ago, I asked Kennedy about his junior colleague. He launched a series of respectful encomiums, but couldn't resist a tiny jab. I mentioned that he and Kerry had very different styles, even though both were New England aristocrats. Kennedy's style was more emotional, I suggested—at which point the Senator interrupted me, saying, "John comes from a great Massachusetts tradition as well: Leverett Saltonstall, Henry Cabot Lodge . . . "

"Senator, you're naming only Republicans," I noted (and rather stuffy Brahmin Republicans at that).

Kennedy smiled slightly and replied, "Yes, but they made their mark. They were winners."

When John Kerry arrived in the Senate, in 1985, his first challenge was to figure out how to coexist with Kennedy. There were two possible strategies. One was to settle back and take a seat on the Appropriations Committee, a sure ticket to perpetuity in the Senate. The job of appropriators is to decide how to spend federal money; as politicians, they tend to be as blowsy and lugubrious as the bills that stumble out of their committee. Obviously, this was not the sort of career John Kerry had intended for himself, and so he chose the Foreign Relations Committee, which, by the mid-eighties, was not nearly as glamorous as it had been during the Vietnam era. The public was no longer very interested in foreign policy; and for a politician it held little practical allure—no taxing, no spending, no hardware to buy, no regulations to set. "But it was about war and peace," Kerry said. "We were entering an illegal war in Latin America. One of the lessons of Vietnam was about lying, about people who hide the truth from the American people, and there was a real parallel in Latin America."

Kerry started a series of investigations into the Reagan Administration's involvement with the Nicaraguan Contras, a guerrilla group opposed to the left-wing Sandinista government. His subcommittee on narcotics and terrorism revealed that Oliver North, a junior Marine officer assigned to the White House, was in charge of funnelling arms to the Contras; and suggested that some of the C.I.A. operatives who supplied the Contras were flying narcotics back to the United States (a fact that the C.I.A. finally acknowledged almost a decade later); and then that Panama's dictator Manuel Noriega had been involved with the arms-running, the drug-running, and the C.I.A. From there, Kerry began to investigate Noriega's money-laundering operation, which was run through the Bank of Credit and Commerce International, in the Cayman Islands. The B.C.C.I. trail led to its partner, First

American Bank, in Washington, D.C., which was represented by Clark Clifford, who had served every Democratic President from Harry Truman to Jimmy Carter. "John wasn't a very popular guy when he called Clark Clifford to testify," David McKean, the committee's chief investigator at the time, said. "Most of the other members of the committee were uncomfortable with it. I remember that one senator cornered Kerry in the elevator and said, 'What are you doing to my old friend Clark Clifford?' But those hearings were the first real look at how terrorists, drug dealers, and international criminals conducted their business."

Indeed, Kerry was soon about as popular in Washington's political community as he'd been in Massachusetts. "He was a very driven, very relentless guy, and that could be off-putting to his colleagues," Timothy E. Wirth, who was a senator from Colorado at the time and later became Kerry's friend, recalls. "He was an outsider. In fact, you never saw him around much, with good reason—he was up in Boston with his girls. My sense is that Julia wasn't always reliable during those years, and John took a lot of responsibility for raising the kids. He would rush up there for every school play and soccer match. You had the sense that he was a very lonely guy. He was being hacked to death by the *Globe*, and others, and he never had anyone to share it with."

Kerry was easily reëlected to the Senate in 1990, but his political career was in remission. His Presidential ambitions seemed vestigial; he wasn't even mentioned as a possible candidate in 1992. At times, Kerry's name appeared more often in the gossip columns than on the editorial pages; rumors about his romantic life were frequent, and occasionally disdainful.

But the third reel of John Kerry's Heroic Life Story was about to begin; and it started where the first had ended, in Vietnam.

"When he ran for lieutenant governor in 1982, John didn't want to have anything to do with Vietnam," Cameron Kerry, the Senator's younger brother, who managed the campaign, says. "He didn't even want us to show a picture of him in uniform in the campaign ads."

Vietnam was inescapable, of course. In 1984, Jim Shannon had deployed a group of anti-Kerry veterans; their attacks were effective and discomfiting. The Kerry campaign found no effective response until after the final debate, and then the antidote arrived by accident. Shannon brought up Vietnam and, in effect, called Kerry a hypocrite because he'd fought in a war he didn't believe in.

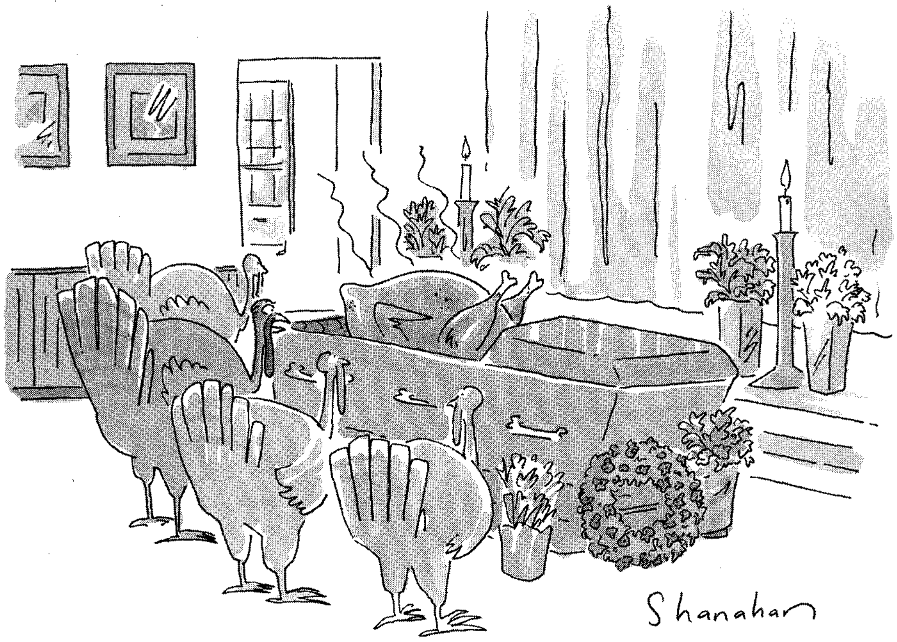
The next day, Kerry headquarters was deluged with calls from infuriated veterans: Shannon hadn't fought in Vietnam; they hadn't been so lucky—and they hadn't "chosen" to go to war, either. In their final debate, Kerry asked for an apology, and Shannon said, "That dog won't hunt."

An emotional rally of Vietnam veterans had already been held at the State House, and now a flying squad, which called itself the Doghunters, was organized to confront Shannon. It has been a fixture in every Kerry campaign since. "After the 1984 election, the Doghunters had a black-tie dinner at my house, and the only thing we didn't drink was the Aqua Velva," John Marttila, a political consultant who has worked on every Kerry campaign, says. "They've had regular dinners ever since. When you see John with those guys, you realize what bullshit the stuffy, aloof caricature of him is. I think he may be at his best, his most comfortable, with other Vietnam veterans."

Over time, that proved to be true in the Senate as well. In 1991, the Majority Leader, George Mitchell, of Maine, asked Kerry to chair a committee to investigate the possibility that American prisoners of war were still being held in Vietnam. The Rambo films were in vogue then; various paramilitary charlatans were raising money from the families of those missing in action to go on "rescue" missions in Vietnam; *Newsweek* had published, on its cover, a photograph of three Americans allegedly held in a Vietnamese prison camp (the picture was soon found to have been doctored).

"Nobody wanted to be on that damn committee," Bob Kerrey said. "It was an absolute loser. Everyone knew that the P.O.W. stories were fabrications, but no one wanted to offend the vet community." George Mitchell and John Kerry began twisting arms. Kerrey, John McCain, Chuck Robb, and Hank Brown—all the other Vietnam combat vets then in the Senate—agreed to serve on the committee, as did Daniel Inouye and Bob Dole, who were Second World War veterans. (Al Gore was the only Vietnam-era vet who refused.)

"I wasn't very close to John before that," John McCain recalls. "I thought he was standoffish and pedantic. Actually, no—I was the standoffish one, because I didn't agree with what he'd done, the protest where they threw away their medals." In fact, McCain had campaigned against Kerry during the general election of 1984. "But I gained a



"It looks nothing like him."

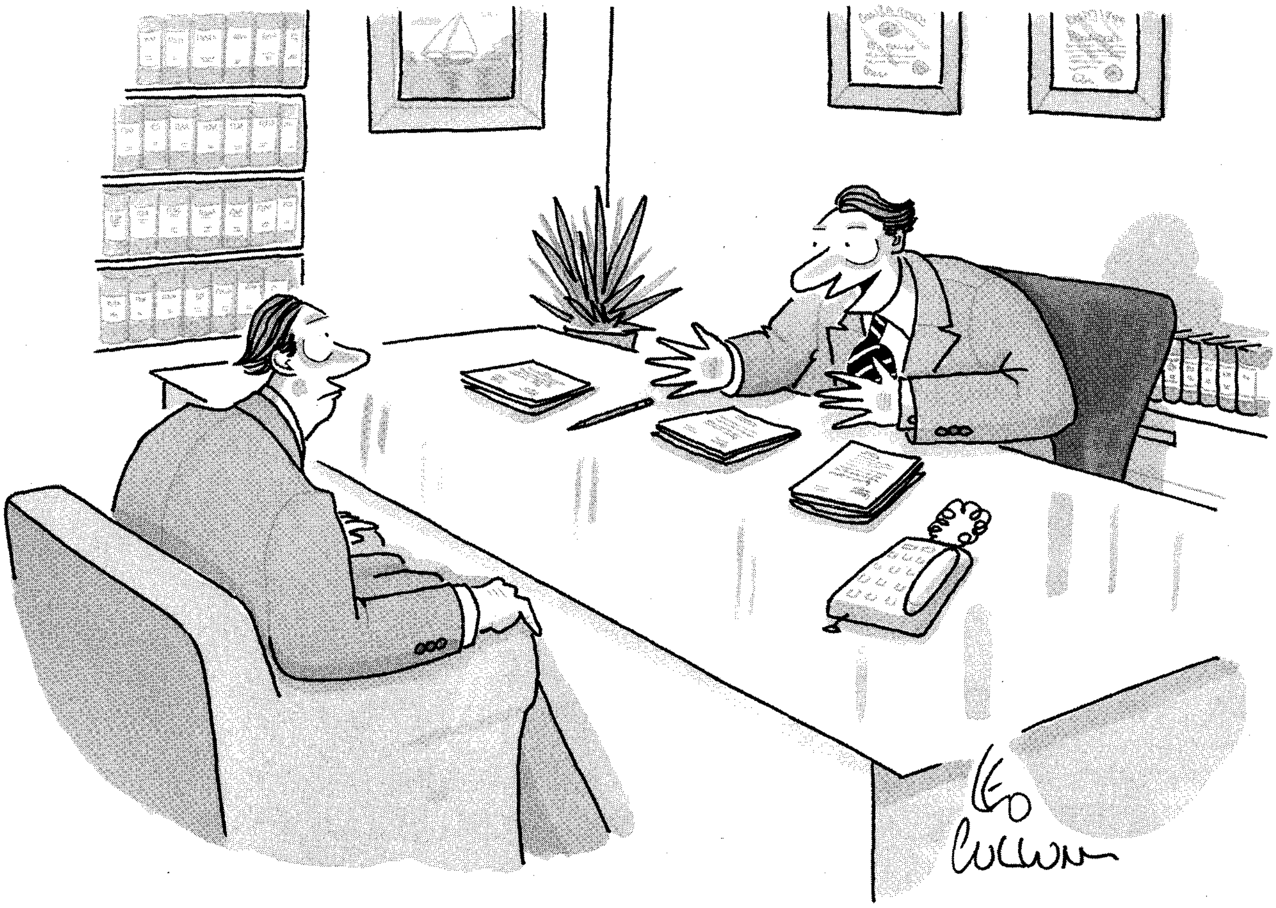
great deal of respect, and affection, for John during those P.O.W.-M.I.A. hearings. He was a lot more mature, a lot more patient than I was." Kerry was especially helpful when some of the more extreme P.O.W.-movement types testified before the committee. "I'd see the way some of these guys were exploiting the families of those missing in action, and I'd begin to get angry," McCain went on, "and John would sense it and put his hand on my arm to calm me down before I'd lose"—McCain paused and smiled—"my effectiveness."

Kerry and McCain went to Vietnam together; they visited the cell where McCain had been held as a prisoner of war. "Just to stand there alone in this tiny cell with McCain, just to look at this guy who was now a United States senator, and my friend, in the very place where he'd been tortured, and kept for so many years, not knowing if he might live," Kerry began a sentence one day, sitting in his Capitol office—and then he seemed unable to finish the thought, unwilling to break through his public reserve. "We found this common ground in this far-off place."

After more than a year of research and eight trips to Vietnam, Kerry managed to cajole a unanimous vote from his committee—including two Republicans, Bob Smith, of New Hampshire, and Chuck Grassley, of Iowa, who had been banging the P.O.W. drum the loudest—in favor of a report saying it was very unlikely that any Americans had been left behind in Vietnam. It was the sort of labor-intensive, quietly useful work that other senators notice and respect. The committee's unanimity made it possible for Bill Clinton to normalize relations with Vietnam, in 1995. In a practical way, Kerry had at last brought an end to the war that had dominated so much of his adult life.

There was a personal consequence as well. The time Kerry spent with McCain—and, to a lesser extent, with Bob Kerrey and Chuck Robb—completed the transformation that the Doghunters had begun. He was no longer a political loner; he was, finally, part of a distinct, bipartisan, and emotionally intense group: the Vietnam combat veterans in the United States Senate. (Max Cleland, of Georgia, and Chuck Hagel, of Nebraska joined the group in 1996; Kerrey and Robb departed in 2000.) They took common positions on veterans' issues, and sometimes on questions of war and peace, but they were most passionately united when one or another of them was attacked.

Remarkably, most have had aspects of their service called into question over the past decade—evidence that Vietnam remains the primary political battlefield of the baby-boom generation. Kerry's service was questioned during his 1996 Senate race against Governor William Weld; a column in the Boston *Globe* asserted that his actions had been imprudent and excessive in the battle for which he received the Silver Star. Earlier, in 1984, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that Kerry had tossed away his combat ribbons, not his medals, at the 1971 protest in Washington. Kerry had never implied otherwise (indeed, the protesters that day had tossed all sorts of things—dog tags, photographs, discharge papers, insignia), but he had complicated the story with an excess of honesty, recalling that he'd also tossed several medals that



"What we're going to say to the jury is 'Love the embezzler. Hate the embezzlement.'"

had been given him by veterans who were unable to make the trip. The journalistic shorthand became: Kerry tossed someone else's medals.

The Doghunters came to Kerry's defense in both cases, and the stories had little impact. Others in the Senate caucus didn't get off so easily. There were the attacks on McCain by pro-Bush veterans in 2000, which helped scuttle his Presidential campaign in South Carolina. And then, in the spring of 2001, Bob Kerrey was accused of participating in a massacre of Vietnamese women and children. "John called and asked me to go to New York to help Bob get through it," Tom Vallely, a veteran and longtime Kerry friend who advised the P.O.W.-M.I.A. committee, said. "I stayed there for several weeks, helping Bob with the press strategy, doing whatever I could."

Kerry, Cleland, and Hagel defended Kerrey in a Washington *Post* op-ed column; they were joined by McCain to defend Kerrey on ABC's Sunday-morning political program "This Week." "I just thought people were piling on after the fact, making judgments they had no knowledge about, that they had no right to make," Kerry told me later. "And I felt very much concerned about Bob personally, because he's a friend and I love him dearly."

"Love" is not a word often tossed around by United States senators, particularly with regard to other United States senators. But Bob Kerrey uses it as well: "The feeling we all have is the closest guys get to love."

Finding his place among comrades was John Kerry's first step in from the political cold. There were two others, frequently cited by friends: his victory over William Weld in the 1996 Massachusetts Senate race and his improbable second marriage, to Teresa Heinz.

The notion that John Kerry married Teresa Heinz for political reasons—specifically, to use her money to run for President—is put to rest within nanoseconds of meeting her: this is a flagrantly impolitic human being. The marriage is bursting with strong emotions and ill-concealed conflicts, and much too complicated for the facile armchair psychologizing that goes on during a Presidential campaign. It is not the sort of relationship that an ambitious politician, in his right mind, would want; it is likely to be a distraction for the press corps, an easy way to obscure the campaign's "message." One can only conclude, it must be love.

Heinz will not be censored. "John went on too long," she said the day I met her, after watching her husband deliver his Iraq speech in the Senate Chamber on C-SPAN. "But that's what happens when he starts thinking about history."

We were sitting in the study of Mrs. Heinz's Georgetown home—the walls were painted in the same darkened, glossy Chinese red as Kerry's Senate office, but they were covered with priceless art, in particular Dutch still-lifes from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. We were not alone. Chris Black, formerly of the Boston *Globe* and CNN, sat with us—she was hired to help Mrs. Heinz with the press after a Washington *Post* story, widely regarded in the political community as disastrous, described the quirky quality of the marriage. The story emphasized Mrs. Heinz's enduring devotion to her first husband, John Heinz, who died in a plane crash in 1991. There are pictures of Heinz throughout the house, and Kerry's staff refer to her as "Mrs. Heinz." And so I began by asking a slightly wicked question: "How did you meet your husband?"

"You mean John—John Kerry," she said. We spent the next several hours talking, much of the time taken up by Heinz's long monologues about her past—she grew up in Mozambique, the daughter of a Portuguese doctor—and her work as an environmentalist and as a social-policy expert, which is quite impressive (among other things, Massachusetts recently adopted a means-tested prescription-drug plan for senior citizens that was developed by the Heinz family foundation).

But Heinz's descriptions of the courtship with Kerry, which began when they were both delegates to the 1992 Earth Summit, in Rio de Janeiro, were cautious and dispassionate. She seemed to be trying out a new, more politic story line; she had clearly been rehearsed, but she was unrehearsable. She went to Mass with Kerry in Rio, she recalled, and heard him singing in Portuguese. "I found that interesting," she said. (He explained that he knew some Italian and had been faking it.) They were joined for dinner by Senators Frank Lautenberg and Larry Pressler, neither of whom is known as a barrel of laughs, but the meal somehow turned out to be riotous fun. They spent the evening, she said, mocking the inanities of public life.

Months later, in Washington, there was another dinner, and Kerry offered to drive her home. They stopped at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial; he showed her the names of his friends on the granite wall. When he dropped her off in Georgetown, he didn't accompany her to the door, which irked her. (Kerry claims that he was double-parked, with a bus coming up behind him.) "I thought he was interesting, but . . . a specimen who'd been out in the woods a long time," she said, in her softly accented English. "He was like having a pet wolf who comes in and you say, 'Yeh, cute.' " She made a face and pulled away. "I need to teach him a couple of things. I think many people who get married late in life and who haven't been married have adjustment problems." (Several times, Heinz noted that Kerry "had never been married," an odd elision, which one friend attributed to her Catholicism: "She is not comfortable with the fact that he was married and divorced.")

Heinz's eccentricities and her awkward candor are indeed an easy target, but they are also misleading, according to friends, who are vehement in their support of the marriage. "She is incredibly loving and involved in his life," says former Senator Tim Wirth, who, with his wife, Wren, has been among Heinz's closest friends. "She won't let him get away with the things he used to keep to himself. She forces him to talk, to express emotions. This has been terrific for him."

Heinz is five years older than Kerry, and there is a motherly quality to her descriptions of him: "John has an elegant mind. His thinking is not brutish. He really likes to take his time, talk things through, to deliberate." In fact, his interests in the world are "insatiable," she said. "We see a beautiful sunset and he says, 'I really want to know how to paint that.' He's learning the classical guitar, he's learning windsurfing, he's learning sky-whatever-it-is, and I say, 'You got married, remember. What else do you want to learn?' "

I asked her once more about their courtship. "I think what happens when you're older and you've had a relationship like the one I'd had"—she was referring to her twenty-five years with John Heinz—

"your measurements aren't quite the same. You find the things that are comfortable, like old shoes. Talking about a lot of issues, that was comfortable. It was nice to do that again. There were other things that were familiar, like languages, like having lived in Europe. . . . And then you get to the point where you like somebody so much that when you're not with him you miss him. We were careful. I certainly was careful. It's not like you're eighteen and it's *ahhh*." Mrs. Heinz paused, and changed the subject slightly. "And then, of course, we got married, and we had that wonderful Senate race. That was our wedding present."

The 1996 Senate campaign between John Kerry and William Weld was the rarest of events in latter-day American politics: a civil, closely contested, intelligent, and wildly entertaining brawl. "Both candidates were incredibly popular," the Kerry consultant John Marttila said. "Both had sixty-per-cent favorable ratings, and negatives in the twenties. And they maintained their popularity throughout the race."

Both were Brahmins, but Weld, with a shock of strawberry hair and irony to burn, seemed an honorary Hibernian—once again, Kerry was faced with an opponent bound to be favored by the reportorial romantics at the Boston *Globe*. "We were both comers," recalls Weld, who had just been reëlected governor, with seventy-one per cent of the vote. "We were both at the height of our powers. If I'd won that race, I was going to turn straight around and run for President in 2000. I think he was, too—although I guess he eventually decided that Gore had too big a head start."

The campaign began with a remarkable agreement to limit campaign spending, negotiated face to face by the two candidates in Kerry's Beacon Hill mansion. They also agreed to a series of eight debates, some of which would be Lincoln-Douglas style, with the two candidates questioning each other directly, without a mediator. Weld figured that his issues—crime, welfare reform, and tax cutting—and his charm would see him through, but mostly his charm. "John isn't really a cold person, but he does seem aloof," Weld said recently. "The truth is that he's courtly to the point of gentility. We were pummelling him through August, but his campaign turned on a dime when Bob Shrum was hired as his consultant. It went from flaccid to sharp in a week."

Kerry's aides insist that it was more than Shrum. They say that Kerry was distracted in Washington, that he didn't really focus on the campaign until the Senate recessed. "It wasn't a lack of focus," Kerry says. "It was a strategy. I figured people wouldn't really be paying attention until the fall debates."

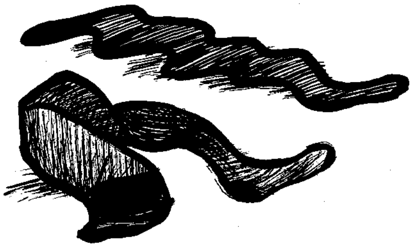
The last four debates were fabulous political theatre—two very smart men having at each other. "John's at his best under pressure, when he's being seriously challenged," Paul Nace, an old Navy friend, says. "He gets really cool, very calm. He really is a warrior—he just loves it. I took one look at him as he was walking into Faneuil Hall for one of the last debates and I thought, Bill Weld has no idea what's about to hit him."

Weld—who calls the debates a "bloody draw"—says that Kerry successfully attached him to the national Republican Party. (Weld had said some embarrassingly positive things about Newt Gingrich two years earlier.) "The turning point came when he asked me if I'd vote to keep Jesse Helms as the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. That was a killer."

I asked Weld how he responded. "I ducked it, of course," he said, with a smile. "I mean, I hated Jesse Helms. But what could I do?"

Kerry won the election by eight percentage points. "John has always been underestimated politically," Marttila says. "But that race had the quality and intensity of a Presidential campaign, and he won. I don't see how they can underestimate him anymore, but they probably will."

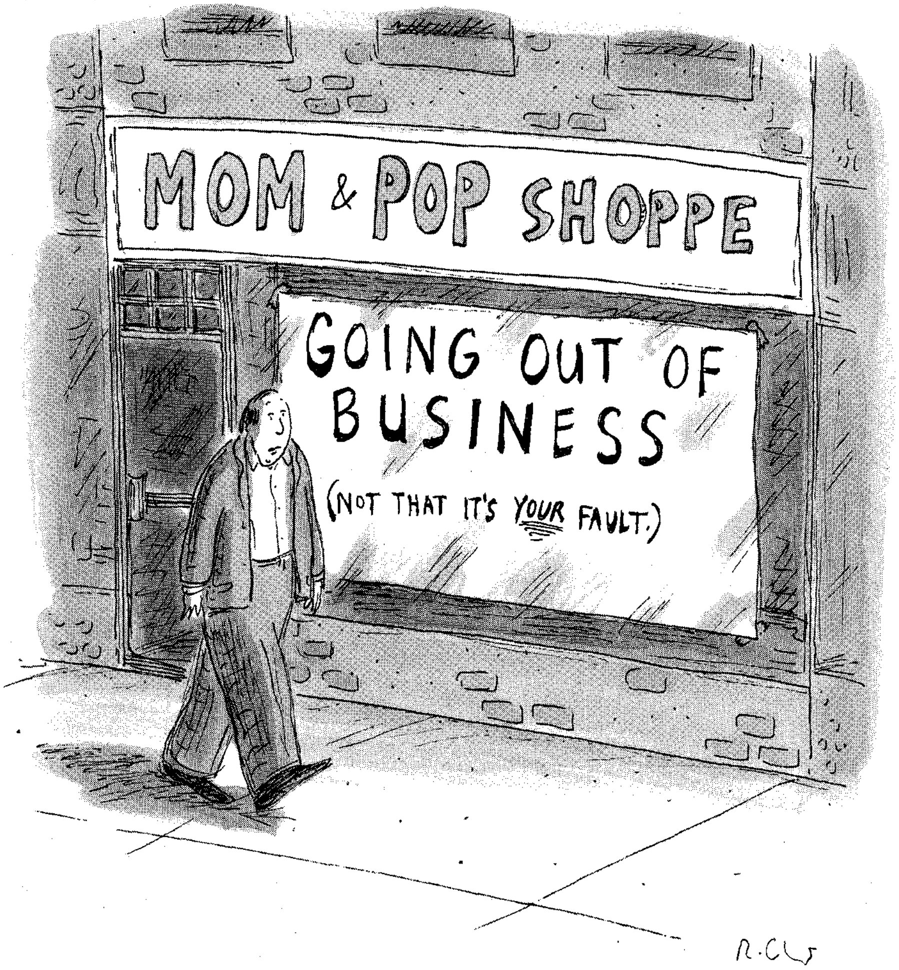
John Kerry will not be the only Democrat running for President in 2004, of course, and the race will turn, more than any campaign in recent memory, on events outside the control of the politicians—war in the Middle East, a terrorist event at home, a sluggish economy (or the opposite: a Bush boom). Any attempt to handicap an outcome would be foolish in the extreme.



But it is possible to sense a mood. There is a frustration with the mechanical, poll-driven, consultant-managed politics of recent years. The mood is particularly easy to discern in New Hampshire, a state that John McCain took by storm in 2000. "People have had it," Rick Katzenberg, a Democratic activist from the town of Amherst, said a few weeks before Election Day. "They've just been overwhelmed this year. They're sick of all the telemarketing—the phone calls to get out to vote, the opinion surveys, the push polls. I don't even trust polling results anymore, because people are so quick to hang up. The television ads have no impact, except to get people angrier. It's a very tough atmosphere."

John Kerry understands the mood, and he particularly understands what his friend McCain accomplished in 2000. He is also aware that McCain supporters—the Republicans and Independents who can cross over and participate in the Democratic primary—will be a significant voting bloc in 2004, when the Democrats are likely to be the only party in town. He also knows that he could not ever, not even remotely, pass for John McCain. He doesn't have McCain's outlaw sensibility, for one thing, or his Borscht Belt comic timing. But the McCain campaign is the model Kerry thinks about most seriously: "People are jaded, people are cynical—there's been a breach of faith. You have to reëstablish a way to connect with people. John McCain did that." We were riding back to Boston after a long day on the stump in mid-October. "He succeeded in building some trust in New Hampshire," Kerry went on. "I think it was built partly on his manner, his approach, and partly on who he was, the story of his life." Kerry stopped and sighed. "Whether I can do that, I don't know. I'm not cocky enough to say that, absolutely, I can do what he did. But I know it's worth trying."

Kerry is a much smoother candidate than he was thirty years ago, when I first watched him work. There are times when he can even rouse an audience, get them to stand and cheer; more often, however, the reaction is attentive silence. His audiences, almost entirely Democratic activists at this point, follow his foreign-policy formulations closely, but sometimes they grow impatient with him. One Sunday in Nashua, New Hampshire, a woman named Marilyn Peterman actually interrupted Kerry in mid-disquisition on Iraq. "You're letting Bush hijack the debate!" she yelled. "What about the economy? What about the war on terrorism?"



Peterman was angry, she later told me, about Kerry's Iraq vote—and about the Democrats' general lameness. She was disappointed by Kerry's explanations; he didn't come close to reflecting her anger. "I'm trying to keep an open mind," she said. "I was going to support him, especially when he was speaking out against Bush last summer, but now I'm not so sure."

Kerry, when given the chance, pleads consistency on Iraq. He has been making the same argument since 1998: that there needs to be an aggressive multilateral effort to remove Saddam Hussein's arsenal. He believes that pressure from the Democrats—and, of course, from Secretary of State Colin Powell—convinced President Bush to work through the United Nations; and that Bush has been, essentially, on the right path since his speech to the United Nations on September 12th. If so, it has been a substantive victory and a political loss: if Bush proceeds to act prudently for the next two difficult years, he will deserve to be reëlected.

It takes passion to defeat a sitting President. Ronald Reagan had it in 1980; Bill Clinton in 1992. The Democrats have been notable for their lack of passion in recent elections. They have become the party of tactics, of risk-averse appeals to targeted, reliable constituencies, like the elderly. Their crimped, boring pessimism is a long, sad distance from John Kennedy's vigor and idealism—and I asked Kerry, as we rode back from New Hampshire that night, if there was anything from the Kennedy experience that could be resurrected profitably now. He reacted defensively, fearing a trap. He had spent years working to bury the invidious J.F.K. comparisons; in recent elections, he had even excised the "F." from his bumper stickers. "That was a once-in-a-lifetime moment," he said, curtly, of Kennedy, "and I think anyone who tried to mimic it, reinvent it, reach it, or touch it would be making a mistake."

Several weeks later, after the Democrats' election losses, Kerry revised and amended his remarks on the phone. "I guess I was responding to the Camelot thing, the romanticism," he said. "But there are other aspects of the Kennedy era that are applicable. I think that asking people to be part of something larger than themselves, asking the country to do something better and more important—those are aspects of the Kennedy legacy that are applicable now."

Inspirational politics seems an oxymoron after thirty years of public scandal and cynicism. But any Democrat who hopes to have a chance in 2004 must find a way to rebuild the Party intellectually, and to reach new constituencies, particularly the young people who have been boycotting elections in droves. This will require a new political style and vocabulary. It will certainly require a break from the past as dramatic as John F. Kennedy's 1960 campaign was. It is quite possible that Kerry's thoughtful manner and complicated answers will be wrong for the moment. But it is also possible that his calm maturity will seem Presidential, particularly if he somehow manages to combine it with a touch of McCain, the exhilaration of candid, inconvenient positions on the issues of the day—and, no small irony, he will need a touch of Kennedy as well. Indeed, John Kerry may have to become the politician he once dreamed of being. He may have to do all those old Kennedy things: sound the trumpet, pick up the fallen standard, and see if an army is lurking about, waiting to respond.

"I've reached the point where I'm just going to do what I'm going to do, and to hell with whatever the conventional wisdom is," Kerry told me last summer, as we cruised in his speedboat off Naushon Island. It seemed the sort of thing politicians always say at the beginning of a campaign, but then he added, "I mean, if I screw up, what are they going to do to me—send me to Vietnam?" ♦

A CRITIC AT LARGE

DEGAS'S MYSTERY PAINTING

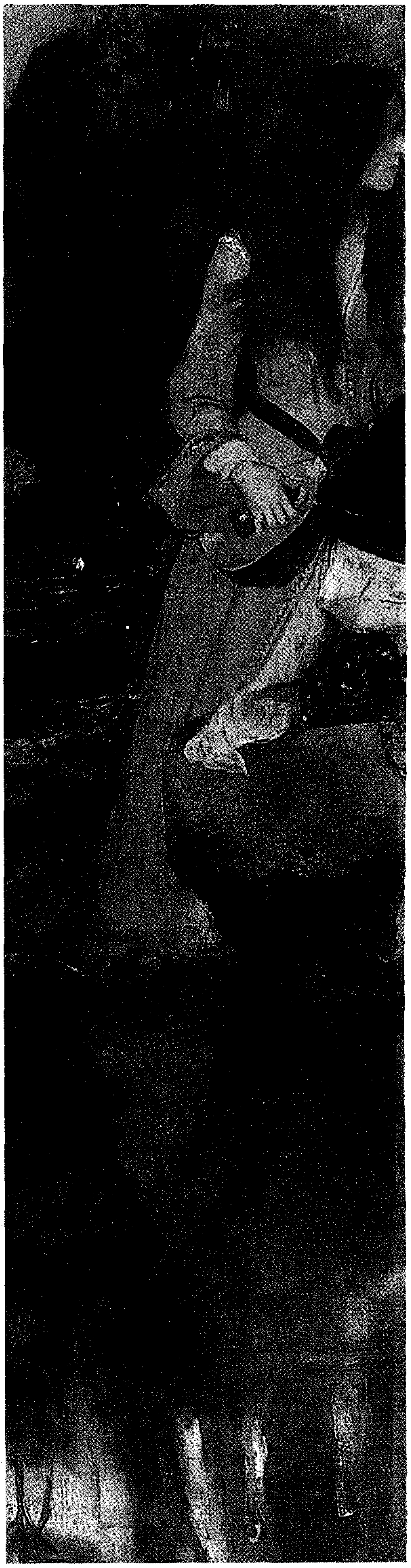
Who was Eugénie Fiocre, and what was she to the artist?

BY ARLENE CROCE

Although Edgar Degas, the son of a music-loving banker, is almost certain to have attended the Paris Opéra from an early age, the fact that he didn't begin painting its dancers until he was thirty-three years old has long puzzled art historians, and the painting with which he began, the large, dreamy pastoral scene known as “Mlle Fiocre in the Ballet ‘La Source,’ ” has puzzled them even more. Three women on a riverbank, one playing a lute, the two others bathing their feet while a horse drinks, suggest nothing that could be part of a ballet. One would not even think to connect the subject with dance but for the pair of pink satin ballet slippers lying on the bank between the horse's forelegs. That little detail and Degas's original title provide the only clues to the meaning of the picture, and it is a very oblique title—“Portrait de Mlle E. F. . . .; à propos du ballet de la Source.” Not *in* the ballet “La Source” but only *à propos* of it. When the painting was unveiled in 1868 at the Paris Salon, viewers were no less mystified than they are today. Zola admired its execution, but thought it should have been called “A Halt Beside a Pool.” Under its misleading latter-day, probably posthumously imposed title, the portrait of Mlle. Fiocre has hung since 1921 in the Brooklyn Museum, one of the last paintings to be sold from Degas's private collection, following his death. Currently, it can be seen in the show “Degas and the Dance,” at the Detroit Institute of Arts until January 12th, and at the Philadelphia Museum of Art from February 12th to May 11th. As the cornerstone of a major show, the work that forecast the artist's lifelong obsession with the ballet, “Mlle Fiocre” becomes an object of curiosity all over again. Is it a stage scene, a real scene that happens to be on a stage, or an altogether real scene? Who are the two other women? Above all, what was Mlle. Fiocre to Edgar Degas that he should have pictured her thus?

The matter of the setting is addressed by the show's curators, Jill DeVonyar and Richard Kendall, who relate “Mlle Fiocre” to the tradition of theatrical paintings that deleted the stage frame and presented the scene in its natural state. “Mlle Fiocre” is unusual in being, as they say, a “hybrid composition,” neither in one world nor the other. The riverbank could be covered with vegetation or Oriental carpeting—one's eyes can believe both. But what about the water and the horse? Some art historians (and, I fear, some dance historians) have assumed that the painting represents not an actual scene in the ballet “La Source” but a break in rehearsal. Well, no. There was water on the stage in “La Source,” just as there were horses—in the first act, Fiocre entered on horseback, in a caravan—but surely it was not the Opéra's custom to water the horses on the stage, and surely Degas knew how to paint painted scenery. He chose not to show us the flow of water over canvas that evoked gasps when the curtain went up. (The gasps were actually caused less by the waterfall than by the electric light that illuminated it.) No, we are not in a theatre. This is not a stage set. Those rocks are real rocks, and that water is a real pool, deep and dark.

The reality of the source, then—the spring, the fountainhead—is what Degas is interested in painting, not the illusion. The depth of his engagement with the subject leads me to think that he had it in mind before he even saw the ballet. The origins of dance—ancient, Eastern, feminine—had been hinted at by Ingres and Corot and Delacroix, but it was Degas who gave voice to the idea. The fact that nothing in Degas's work leads up to this moment—no previous ballet pictures, no sign, among dozens of sketches of entertainers, of any spe-



Degas's failure to convey his intended meanin

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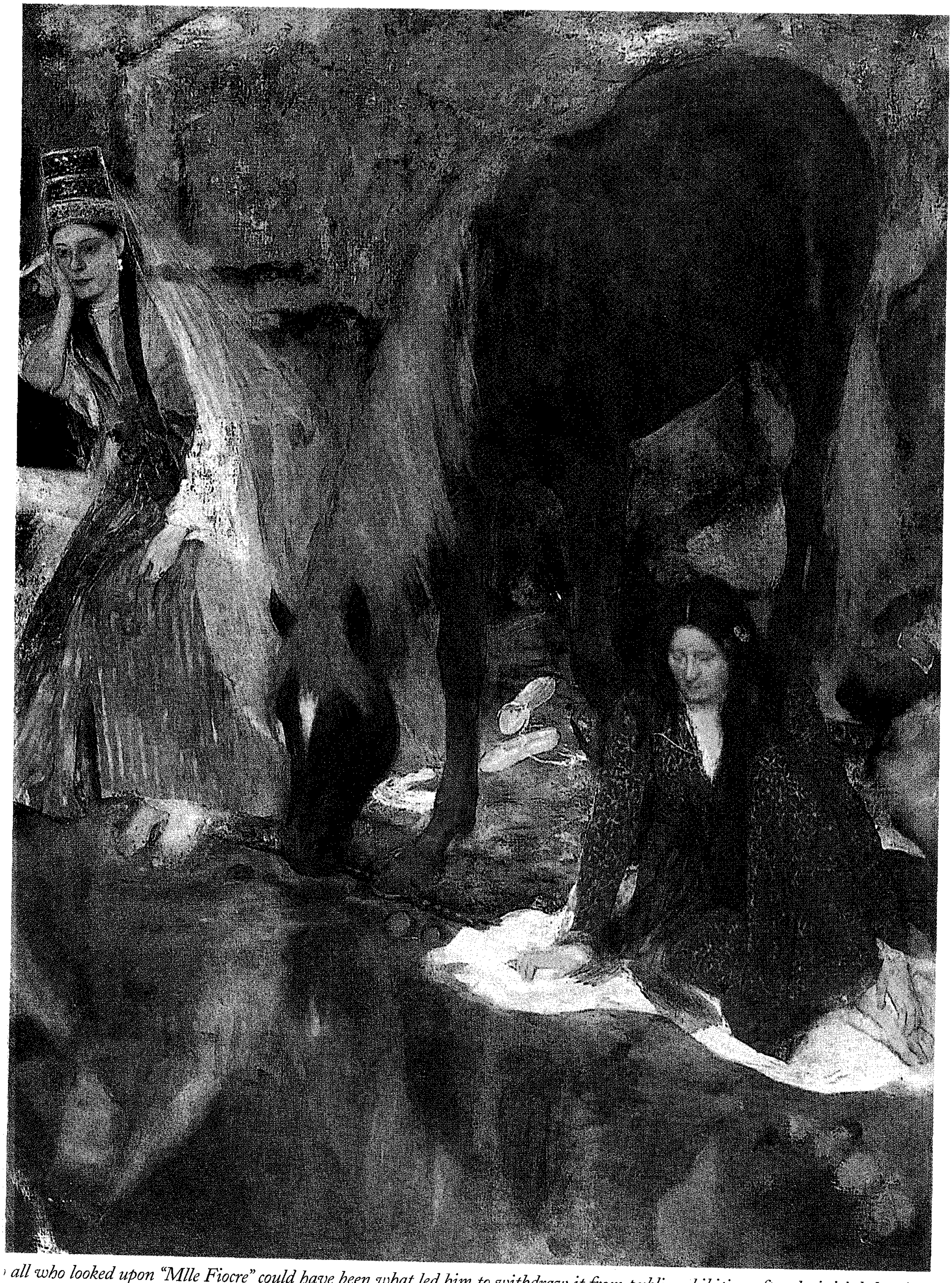


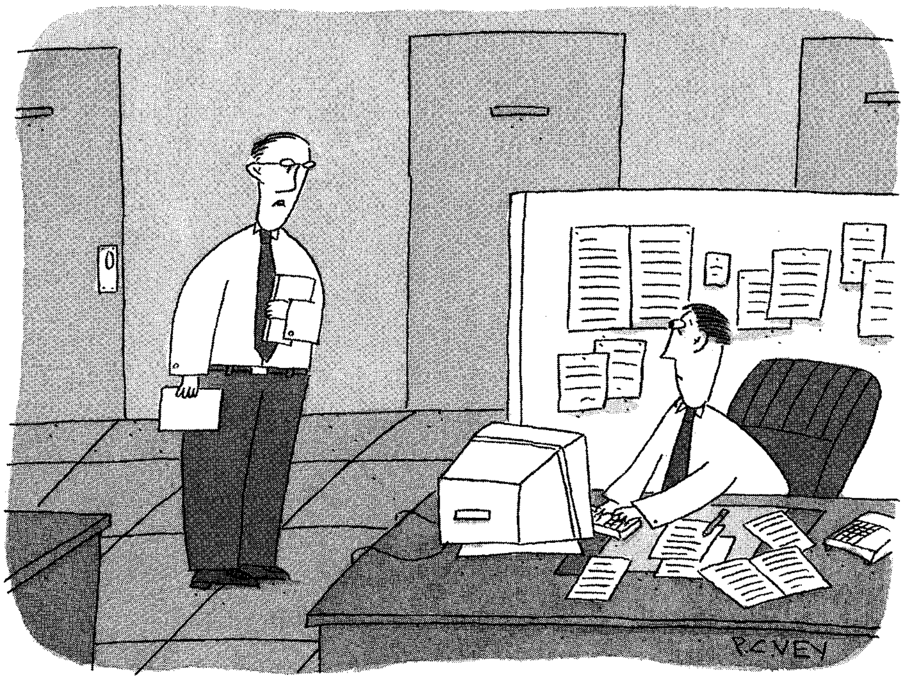
all who looked upon "Mlle Fiocre" could have been what led him to withdraw it from public exhibition after the initial showing.

cial interest in the dance—suggests that "La Source" came as a revelation, or at least as a means of focussing what may have been years of unreflective pleasure at the ballet. Art historians have tended to recoil from the notion of Degas as a balletomane, and maybe he himself resisted becoming one, but there is no question that he developed his balletic sensibility among the *abonnés* at the Opéra. In the catalogue essays, DeVonyar and Kendall concentrate—a little too exclusively, I think—on Degas at the Opéra, building up a case for his connections with that institution, his intimate knowledge of backstage operations, and his closeness with orchestra musicians and ballet personnel, many of whom lived near him in the Opéra district, still going about their business despite the long decline of the ballet in Paris. The world-famous, now crumbling old opera house on the Rue le Peletier was due for demolition. (It burned down in 1873, two years before it could be replaced by the Palais Garnier.) "La Source," the largest and costliest production of its kind in five years, was rumored to be the thing that would restore the Opéra ballet to its former glory. Degas, who lived on the same street as its choreographer, Arthur Saint-Léon, could not have failed to follow the day-by-day development of so important a work. Saint-Léon was creating it for his protégée, the gifted twenty-one-year-old German dancer Adèle Grantzow. The music for two of its four acts was being written by a composer new to ballet, Léo Delibes. Apart from those features, though, there was nothing novel about "La Source." The libretto was standard Opéra romanticism, with a water-nymph heroine and an exotic Eastern setting. In the nineteenth century, few images were more romantic than the Oriental caravan or more erotic than the harem; "La Source" contained both. Fiocre's caravan was derived from "Lalla Rookh" (1817), Thomas Moore's wildly popular tale about a Hindu princess on her bridal journey who, during encampments, is entertained by a minstrel playing a lute—a role taken by Saint-Léon in an earlier ballet based on Moore's novel. There had also been an opera, "Lalla-Roukh" (1862), with a score by Félicien David, which had had a pronounced effect on Léo Delibes—and perhaps on Edgar Degas, but we don't know. (As an Opéra Comique production, it doesn't figure among the attractions that Degas, in the DeVonyar-Kendall estimate, is likely to have attended.)

"La Source" didn't quite live up to its promises. Owing perhaps to irreparable circumstances (and a confusing and conventional book), it proved to be not a glorious occasion but the prelude to one—"Coppélia," which Saint-Léon and Delibes produced four years later. Degas would have been in at the beginning of this resurgence in the Opéra ballet's fortunes. As "Mlle Fiocre" reveals, he was aware of both its artistic significance and its transcendental meaning.

In ballet history, "La Source" is the story of Saint-Léon and Grantzow; in art history, it is the story of Degas and Fiocre. The ballet is remembered today because of two things: Delibes's music (Balanchine extracted one of his "Paris Opéra" specials from it) and Degas's painting. That may be enough, but a dance lover is surely entitled to wonder why it was Fiocre, by all accounts an unremarkable dancer, whom Degas commemorated, and not Saint-Léon's beloved Grantzow. Degas may have pondered this very question. At the première, November 12, 1866, Grantzow, on whom everything depended (or so Saint-Léon believed), was unable to dance. Her replacement, Guglielmina Salvioni, did not have the impact that Eugénie Fiocre had in her lesser role of Nouredda, a Georgian princess. Compared with the imperious Nouredda, the Source seemed colorless, an abstraction rather than a character, and not as closely connected with the ballet's Transcaucasian setting, which was exceptionally vivid, both scenically and thematically. Degas delayed getting down to work for almost a year—long enough to see Grantzow take back her part and vindicate Saint-Léon's faith in her. Degas's faith lay with Fiocre, yet from the remote, slightly glazed way he painted her one would hardly know her for the vivacious creature she was reputed to be, still less the one who of all the cast of "La Source" (it included an array of ranking danseuses) had captured his heart.

In 1868, Degas's choice of sitter would not have been wondered at. "Mlle E. F." was a celebrated figure, readily identifiable despite Degas's uncharacteristic treatment of her. Six months younger than Adèle Grantzow, she was already an established star, famous for her figure and her legs. Degas adheres scrupulously to the rule that in portraits women are shown fully clothed; the only legs in the painting belong to the horse. He paints Fiocre in her first-act costume, which he depicts in great detail, beginning with the tall, richly embroidered fez and extending to the stripes in the crêpe-de-Chine skirt, which are reflected



"Doesn't it feel as though we just got through working more hours for less pay?"

DANA FRADON

"The tell-all butler did it!"

• •

upside down in the water. The flower Fiocre holds figured in the plot of "La Source": the Spirit of the Source, renouncing her mortal love, turned the flower that held the secret of her power over to her rival, Nouredda, and then sacrificed herself. By depicting Fiocre holding the magic flower, Degas might have been emphasizing a plot point or making one of his own—conferring on Fiocre's Nouredda the authority that Saint-Léon had assigned to the Source. The highlight of Fiocre's performance was her "Pas de Guzla," a whirlwind leg-revealing dance, which she executed moments after her caravan came to a halt beside the water. Obviously, Degas wants to disconnect Fiocre from her dance, but he goes so far as to divorce her from the guzla, the symbol of her performance. He gives the instrument, a kind of lute, to the striking yet anonymous figure on the left, whom he poses in profile with averted eyes. The other woman, crouching down below, drying her foot, also averts her eyes. Only Eugénie gazes out, but away from the viewer.

The averted gazes seem to correspond to the oblique references in the original title of the painting; they're consistent with the enigmatic subject, which is not the ballet "La Source" but something about it or occasioned by it, something that presumably explains the presence of two unidentified women in what purports to be a portrait of Eugénie Fiocre. Are these women dancers? Actresses? Supernumeraries in the cast of "La Source"? Their Gypsy-like attire, less impressive than Eugénie's finery, is still assertive, marking them as women who lead an existence apart from society. The woman on the left—she looks like a hippie of the nineteen-sixties—is playing while the others listen. The averted gazes tell us that the three of them—the musician, the princess, and her attendant—are concentrating on the music. Is it a guzla they are hearing? A guzla is a bowed instrument played on the knee—plainly not the object in the picture.

But what does all this say about the ballet "La Source"?

Perhaps that for Degas it was primarily a musical experience. Perhaps that, in the music of Léo Delibes and in Delibes's collaboration with Saint-Léon, Degas had descried the long-awaited rebirth of French ballet. The "Pas de Guzla" was a stereotypical composition by the uninteresting Ludwig Minkus, who had composed the other half of "La Source," whereas Delibes, in his first ballet score, showed every sign of becoming the next great dance composer, maybe the greatest since Rameau. In the multitalented Saint-Léon—dancer, choreographer, violinist, composer—Delibes had a ballet master in the versatile tradition of Beaujoyeulx and Lully. For Degas to have responded to "La Source" as a musical event is not at all unlikely. He had been brought up loving music; his father frequently staged musicales in the family's home, inviting favorite singers and instrumentalists. Degas liked to paint people playing instruments, and all of the instrumentalists he painted were real musicians. Most likely, Fiocre had only mimed the playing of the guzla in the ballet. Her number was arranged in two parts; she must have mimed the bowing of the first part while her cohort danced, then laid the instrument aside and danced the leg-revealing coda by herself. I am assuming that the instrument Fiocre brandished was in fact a guzla, the traditional, single-string Balkan instrument, and not the more familiar Arabic lute depicted in the painting. Saint-Léon would certainly have known the difference. He probably patterned the staging of Fiocre's "Pas" after one of his own former solos, switching instruments in an attempt to disguise the fact. Degas switched them back.

Ballet history does not make much of Eugénie Fiocre. Her great contribution was as Franz, the boyfriend in "Coppélia"—one of the many roles she performed *en travestie*. Adèle Grantzow had made her Opéra début in the spring of 1866, in "Giselle." An interesting question to ask about the Degas of this period is: What did he know about ballet and how well did he know it? Had he been taken as a child to see the legendary Marie Taglioni? The Taglioni he invokes in a poem is a remote goddess:

Taglioni, venez, princesse d'Arcadie,
Nymphes, Grâces, venez des âmes
d'autrefois.

But whether she was a memory or a myth is not known. It is quite possible that the first great dancer Degas ever saw as a mature spectator was Grantzow, and he would have seen her in her first youth, at the peak of her physical powers, and, if he saw her Giselle, in a great role. It is also quite possible that none of this meant anything to him at the time. We fall in love with dancers for many reasons besides their dancing. If Degas had given his allegiance to Fiocre in “La Source,” no display of brilliance or power on Grantzow's part could have swayed him. Fiocre had her partisans; Gautier thought her not only beautifully endowed physically but gifted with a flawless sense of line. “Every movement of Mlle Fiocre's miming might provide a subject for a drawing or a statue,” he wrote. “She does not seek this effect; it comes to her unwittingly, through the natural elegance of her limbs, the perfection of her proportions, and the purity of her form.” For most spectators, though, it was Fiocre's offstage doings that were newsworthy and even notorious. Degas's reputed attraction to her sporty social world, the world of spas and racetracks, was one of the things his critics held against him.

As for Grantzow, if Saint-Léon's choreography was in fact worthy of a river goddess and she did indeed reënergize the ballet, as her notices claimed, the effect on Degas's painting would only have been to make it more deeply poetic, perhaps even turning early thoughts of a society portrait alfresco into a meditation on art and life.

“La Source” came at a critical time for Degas, when he was struggling for recognition and resisting the pressure to become commercially successful as a portrait painter. As a portraitist, he was as much concerned with the background as with the face of the sitter. He called his “La Source” a portrait; it had occurred to him to transfer the charming Mlle. Fiocre from her artificial forest setting in the theatre to the transcendental forest setting that she occupied in his imagination: *Fiocre, venez, princesse d'Arcadie*. Apparently, the transference struck observers as incomplete. Even Degas's friends couldn't tell Degas's Fiocre from the Fiocre of society gossip. The year the painting was exhibited, the journalist Edmond Duranty remarked to Manet in dismay over Degas's progress, “He is well on the way to becoming a painter of high life.”

Perhaps, to begin with, Degas was a little bemused by Fiocre's reputation. But the things she was noted for—glamour, worldliness, physical beauty—are muted or concealed in the painting, in possibly intentional contrast to the portrait of her that had been painted by Franz Winterhalter just two years before. The Winterhalter is a genuine Second Empire society portrait, showing Eugénie, winsome in décolleté tulle, with flowers pressed to her bosom. In Degas's picture, Fiocre's costume, that of a princess of the Persian Empire, is as important as she is. Whatever his feelings about Grantzow, he must have been profoundly grateful to Fiocre. All unknowingly, she had encouraged him in his pursuit of what was to become his greatest theme as a painter. It was she who put Degas under the spell of ballet, but now, in portraying her Nouredda, he is pondering the mythic origins of ballet as well as his personal relationship to it. Let others rhapsodize the way Eugénie Fiocre looks in ballgowns or tights; for him, she is the eternal woman of the East who carries the beat of dance within her. Once Degas saw her thus transfigured, the full meaning of “La Source” and of ballet itself must have come alive for him. His failure to convey that meaning to all who looked upon “Mlle Fiocre” could have been reason enough for him to withdraw the picture from public exhibition, which he did

MY MOTHER'S HANDS

Now that she's ashamed of their ancient burls and gibbous knobs—
“Don't be ashamed!” I helplessly cry—
I find myself staring at the raw matter of their
decay, nails crumbling to the opalescent grit
of their lunulae, liver spots speckling the blue dorsal vein
with its throbbing blue limbs, as if the leopard,
symbol of lust in Dante, lay panting, enfeebled,
in the dark wood.

I can't bear that these hands won't always be here,
though I barely noticed them when they were still dexterous,
commanding me to come here, do this chore, listen to this
sweet story, come here, sweetheart, come here . . .

Now a scythelike rod planted within the same index finger
gives it an incongruous come-hither look that forces
passersby to point to themselves, thinking
she's beckoning to them, an optical illusion, of course,
like the Beauty and the Crone.

“This hand is not the crux and matter of you,” I want to say,
but know she'd laugh and ask, “Is it what's the matter
with you?” or—worse—look away in pain, saying,
“It doesn't matter, it doesn't matter.”

And so I hold on tight as she sits in her wheelchair, as if
to guide her somewhere, anywhere, until I kiss her goodbye,
and her hands fall from my own to a spot on her desk
by the glass paperweight that my father gave her
when they were young: clear, abstract, voluptuous,
with five sparkling air bubbles clutching
a bouquet of clouds.

—*David Woo*

after the initial showing. He had worked on the painting right up to the eve of the Salon; the official excuse for withdrawing it—that he was dissatisfied with the result because of a mishap with varnish—is accepted to this day.

"Mlle Fiocre," incarcerated in Degas's private collection and then sidelined in Brooklyn (the museum is not noted for its holdings in nineteenth-century French painting), is the only one of his paintings in which his three great passions—dancers, horses, and music—appear side by side. It is the only attempt to render a complex impression of ballet as an art rather than as a profession. Properly speaking, the mode of "Mlle Fiocre" is allegorical, not impressionistic. But how is it an allegory of ballet? What began as an afterimage, the residue of the total experience of the musical-theatrical event called "La Source," seems to have evolved into a vision, one of the most sublime demonstrations we have of his stated conviction that the artist paints not the actual scene but the transformed one that results from the interaction of imagination and memory: "*You reproduce only that which has struck you—that is, the necessary.*" It is what Degas considered necessary to "Mlle Fiocre" that has caused all the confusion. Like the women in the painting, he averts his gaze. By not representing the spectacle of "La Source," by reducing it to a few carefully chosen, more or less inscrutable elements—the lute, the costume, the horse, the water, and the ballet shoes—Degas created a mystery that has puzzled observers for nearly a century and a half.

Three subjects contain clues to the solution of the mystery: synesthesia, symbolism, and the Garnier Palace.

In the early nineteenth century, the idea of sensory correspondences had been revived by the German writer E. T. A. Hoffmann (the same Hoffmann whose tales would form the basis of "Coppélia") and then been injected into French aesthetics by Baudelaire: "*Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent.*" Musical tones and letters of the alphabet seemed mystically related. Rimbaud's vowels sounded to him like certain colors. When he spoke of *dérèglement de tous les sens*, derangement of the senses, he was referring not to clinical madness but to synesthesia—that scrambling of sensory perceptions which allows one art to take on the attributes of another and thereby gain in realism. For it was realism—actual contact with the complex life of the senses—that the symbolists were aiming at. Not deferred contact, not rhetorical contact, but actual, immediate, rub-your-nose-in-it contact. One of the discoveries that Degas made at the ballet was the multiplicity of sensations it arouses. At the time of "Mlle Fiocre," he was considered a representative French painter with classical inclinations; evidently, critical opinion had not yet caught up with his interest in the classical dance, and it still hasn't. How else explain the fact that he could take a standard allegorical subject like the five senses, give a forthright account of it, and still not be understood, not in his day, not in ours? Granted, allegory is not forthright, and the whole imaginative world of "Mlle Fiocre" is simply inaccessible to anyone unprepared to concede the limitations of specialized knowledge, whether it be of ballet or of art history. Still, how could we have missed the point?

1. Hearing. The first woman plays the lute.

2. Sight. The third woman gazes into the mirror of the pool.

3. Touch. She dries one foot, and Fiocre has both feet in the water.

4. Smell. The flower. Fiocre also wears flowers.

5. Taste. The horse drinks from the pool.

Ballet involves all five senses—it is not just sight and sound. Correctly projected across the footlights, dancing has a vibration; you feel it. It has fragrance; it has savor. Alexandra Danilova liked to say of a pupil with talent, "She has perfume." Balanchine's word for fascinating movement was "tasty," or "juicy." In his famous injunction to "see the music, hear the dance," he could have been quoting Gautier's definition of ballet: "Music that you can see."

But a traditional allegory of the five senses is only one of the things that "Mlle Fiocre" is. If we could make an X-ray of visible music, what it would show is geometry. Looking more closely at "Mlle Fiocre," we see that it is composed of four overlapping triangles. On the left, the lute player forms one triangle, then Eugénie leaning on her pillows, then the long diagonals of the horse's neck and left leg, and finally, below the horse, the pyramid of the third woman. Furthermore, all the tri-

OH, DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME, I'M FINE!
Gurry

angles are reflected upside down in the water. A fifth triangle, pointing downward, appears in the space between Eugénie's left arm and the horse's neck, its V ending at just about the center of the picture. Reading from right to left, we see more triangles; one, with its apex at the crouching woman's toe and its base at the water's edge, broadens out to take in all three women; its complement is the wedge of glassy water. Is it these subliminally echoing forms that give the picture its wonderful stillness and peace? Separated and enclosed by these great divisions, the women have the composure of deities, each in her own space, each with her own inner quiet. But the most dramatic triangles are the four, no, the eight, vertical ones, containing the four principals and their reflections in the water. The four self-reflecting triangles can be read as the four triads of music—major, minor, diminished, and augmented—all of which can be inverted.

"Mlle Fiocre" portrays not the object itself, ballet, but the truth of it as it exists in nature, before it becomes object. The idea that art is immanent in nature goes back to Pythagoras and the harmonic ratios he is said to have discovered by twanging a string at different intervals, drawing out the hidden correspondence between nature and number. On the surface of Degas's painting, music is seen only to be playing a part; in the depths, it is identified with nature and the nature of women. As in an optical illusion, surface and depths remain in play, changing places, refracting semblances, recharging the metaphor of the Source, which trembles perpetually on the brink of dissolution. Are the women really as free as they seem? Yes, but then again no, they are self-confined; enclosed in their triads, they belong to art. The mathematics of nature and of music are the Pythagorean correspondences by which the metaphor has arisen—and may yet dissolve, for music is nature as nature is number.

The word "geometry" means "measurement of the earth." The myth of the ancient river goddesses, the sources, had been canonized some years before by Ingres in his painting of the nude with the water pitcher, "La Source." Ingres in Degas's eyes was a high priest of art, and in 1867—the year "Mlle Fiocre" took shape—the old man died. His "La Source" (1856) was a masterpiece of symbolic geometry: Mother Earth, her elbows drastically triangulated, the V of her crotch marking the picture's exact center, releases the springs of Ocean. The painting was said to have been the inspiration for Saint-Léon's ballet, but the case for a connection between the painting and the ballet cannot be made without reference to the symbolic geometry of Degas's "Mlle Fiocre." A preliminary oil sketch exists, a kind of armature for the finished painting, in which two unclothed women in the poses that would be taken by Fiocre and her crouching companion are seated by a deep pool. The background is brown-green wash—noplace special. The women's reflections in the water receive Degas's close attention; they are sharper and more dramatic than in the later painting. Another oil sketch, of Eugénie by herself, has a similarly sharp triangular reflection. Clearly, Degas was thinking of rhomboids from the beginning, and thinking not only of an inherited tradition of symbolic geometry but also, perhaps, of a singular real-life accident that befell the construction of Garnier's opera house in its early stages. During excavations for the new theatre in 1862, the drills struck water under the spot where the stage was to be built. This was an unknown tributary of the Seine. Wells were sunk, water was pumped, and a permanent underground lake was created in a subbasement to control the river's flow. The mythic significance of this occurrence, the suggestion that the new house was under divine protection, would not have been lost on the man who wrote sonnets to dancers in Arcadia. To heighten the charm of the suggestion, the new opera house was set on a rhomboid site, defined by four newly created streets named for Auber, Scribe, Gluck, and Halévy. That's not all. Inside the house, Garnier had planned a horseshoe auditorium, modelled on the U shape of the natural amphitheatres of the Greeks and the horse spring (the Hippocrene) of the Muses. (It was the horse Pegasus who had stamped open the spring, thereby gaining wings.)

The technique of the classical dance is based on geometry: the turnout of the legs, the counter-positions of limbs, head, arms, and torso. For the rest of his life, Degas sketched, painted, and sculpted living geometry. In "Mlle Fiocre," he observed the methodological relations of painting and dance: as geometry analyzes and displays the anatomy of ballet, the geometrical skeleton on which Degas's scene

"Introspection, J.B., is for losers."

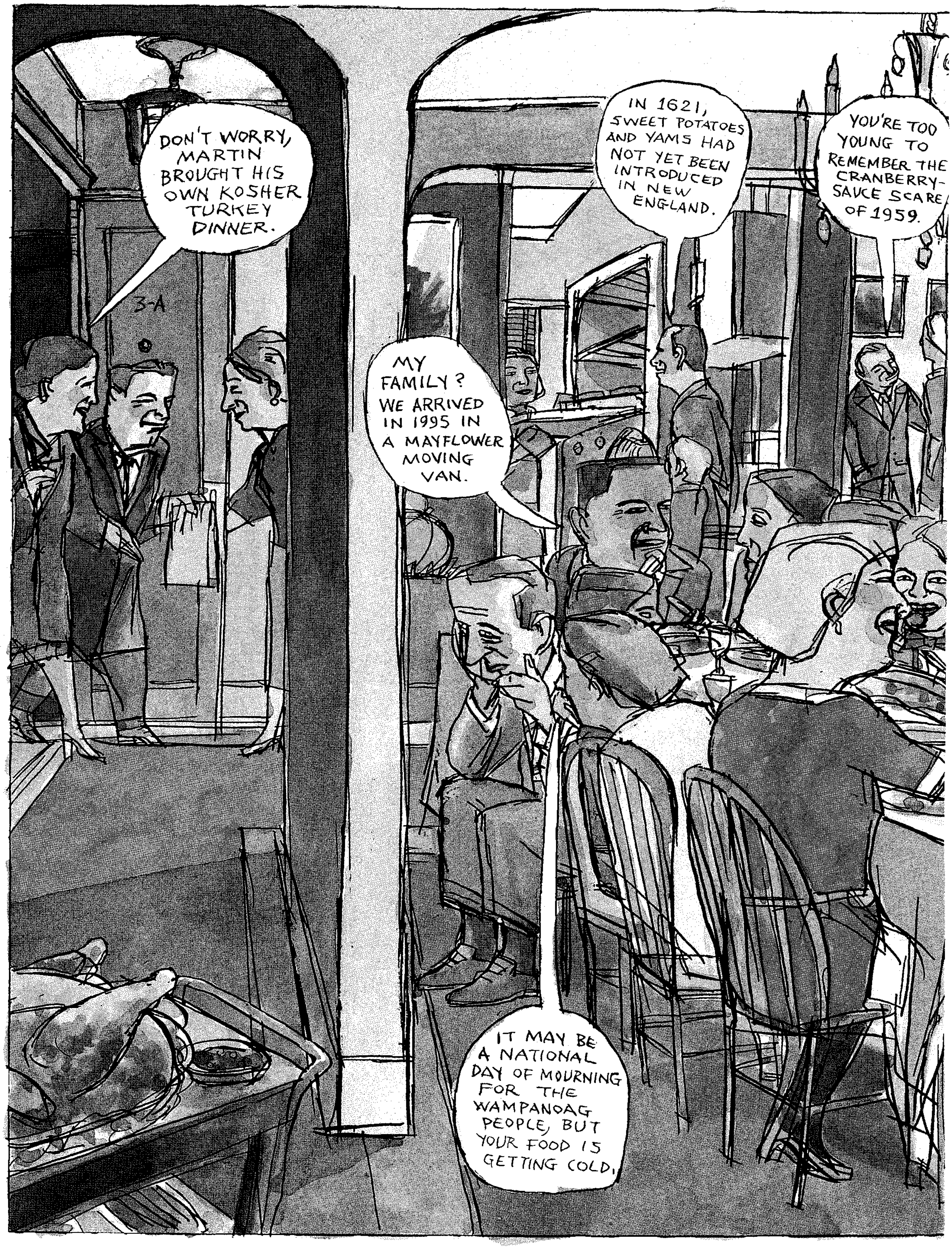
is constructed analyzes and enhances the sensuous feminine appeal of the subject. Fiocre and her companions are women from a special world of women—they are what they do. Probably Degas thought of them as Muses of the three arts that combine to make up ballet: Music, Dance, and Painting. (The Painter is the woman whose gaze into the water represents Sight in the allegory of the five senses.) As women of the ballet, they have a special message-bearing presence. They are not only listening but waiting. The lute player is gazing alertly to the right, the East; at any moment, the rest of the caravan may appear. Whether it does or not, whether the golden age of ballet returns or not, the Muses abide. (The thirsty circus horse is waiting, too—to grow wings again.) Once he has located them in the wilderness of prehistory, Degas does not paint these women again in that or any other natural setting. He moves into the classroom, scene of artifice, and paints them there. Over and over, he shows women working, women resting in order to work some more, women *doing*. Paradoxically, he becomes the painter of real life by studying the methodology of an art.

"A bit prickly, perhaps, but not nearly as frightening as I had imagined."

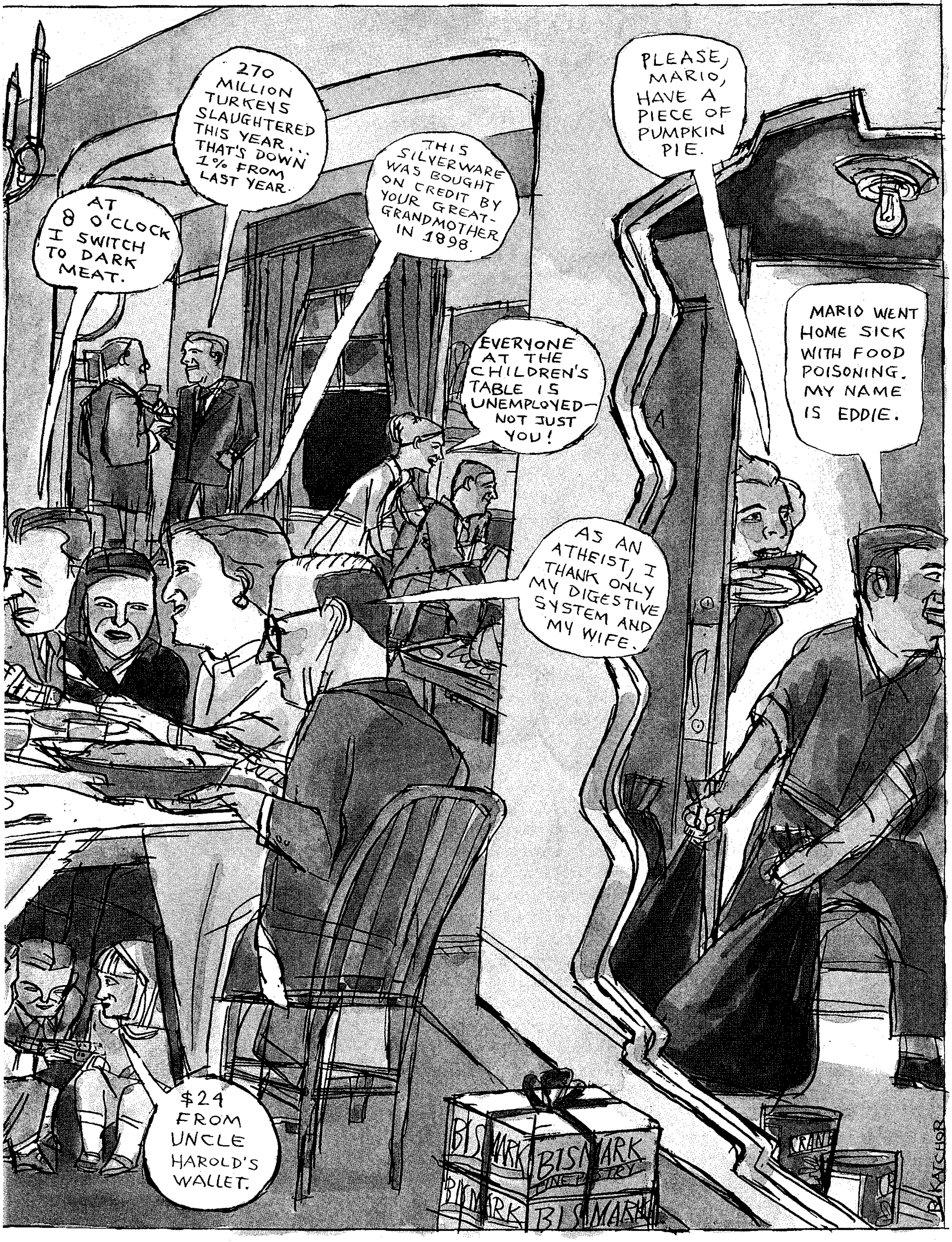
By the early seventies, dancers were coming to Degas's studio to pose. (The women flanking Eugénie Fiocre in the picture were professional models.) Two canvases thus created were "Dance Class" (1871) and "Dance Class at the Opéra" (1872). Their small size, realistic depiction of the subject, and polished surfaces do not invite comparison with "Mlle Fiocre." All the same, every element basic to "Mlle Fiocre" appears reconstituted in each picture. In "Dance Class," Degas's first rendering of that perennial scene, the reconstitution is the more painstakingly complete. The triangle dominates the composition: facing a corner of the classroom, we see a deep wedge of space dotted with the triangular white skirts of the dancers; in the center a soloist stands triangularly (pointe tendue back), while the top-to-toe outline of the figure on the extreme right is unmistakably rhomboid. The lute reappears as the accompanist's violin; there is also a piano with a lyre-shaped pedal support. There is a pair of pink ballet shoes on the piano. The watering can was standard equipment in a dance studio, but of course the water of "Dance Class" is the mirrors. One of these is a *cheval* glass, a mirror with a U-shaped frame. Dancers and their mirror reflections are scattered about the room. There are nine "real" dancers and three reflections in the cheval glass. Nine—"thrice three"—is the number of Muses on Parnassus.

Degas's use of occult symbolism in the classroom picture is the more striking for being thoroughly unsuspected. From the deliberate discrepancies and Romantic otherworldliness of "Mlle Fiocre," we might surmise that there was more there than met the eye, but who would look for occult suggestion in this prosaic scene? Yet it was not prosaic to Degas. And he did not literally move into the classroom in order to paint it; as the art critics point out, his ballet scenes are imaginative reconstructions, not transcriptions from life. To paint dancers in the workplace he no more needed to see them there than he needed to see sources in the forest. For him, the forest was continuous with the classroom, the natural with the artificial, the real with the unreal. This, strange to say, was the consciously held viewpoint of a hardheaded realist. Look at the Painter in "Mlle Fiocre," of the three women the earthiest, the one who is closest to the ground: it is she who appears to bridge the divide between two worlds. Seated at the river's edge, on a towel spread partly onto the water, she yet rests on a surface as hard as glass. The illusion extends to the turf of the riverbank, which looks almost like a carpet with a finished edging, and to Eugénie's pillows, barely distinguishable from the rock that supports them. Degas's brush is so swift and subtle that we could almost think these effects were accidental, almost believe that the occult meanings were not there. In a sense, they aren't. Occult means hidden. We do not have to see these things; they're there only if we notice them. The pattern of suggestion, like the secret geometry of nature, is there for the looking, hidden in plain sight. ♦

THANKSGIVING IN APT. 3-A


DON'T WORRY, MARTIN BROUGHT HIS OWN KOSHER TURKEY DINNER.
3-A
IN 1621, SWEET POTATOES AND YAMS HAD NOT YET BEEN INTRODUCED IN NEW ENGLAND.
YOU'RE TOO YOUNG TO REMEMBER THE CRANBERRY-SAUCE SCARE OF 1959.
MY FAMILY? WE ARRIVED IN 1995 IN A MAYFLOWER MOVING VAN.
IT MAY BE A NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING FOR THE WAMPANOAG PEOPLE, BUT YOUR FOOD IS GETTING COLD.

by Ben Katchor


270 MILLION TURKEYS SLAUGHTERED THIS YEAR... THAT'S DOWN 1% FROM LAST YEAR.
PLEASE, MARIO, HAVE A PIECE OF PUMPKIN PIE.
THIS SILVERWARE WAS BOUGHT ON CREDIT BY YOUR GREAT-GRANDMOTHER IN 1898.
AT 8 O'CLOCK I SWITCH TO DARK MEAT.
MARIO WENT HOME SICK WITH FOOD POISONING. MY NAME IS EDDIE.
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FICTION

SHAMENGWA

BY LOUISE ERDRICH

I

At the edge of our reservation settlement there lived an old man whose arm was twisted up winglike along his side, and who was for that reason named for a butterfly—Shamengwa. Other than his arm, he was an extremely well-made person. Anyone could see that he had been handsome, and he still cut a graceful figure, slim and of medium height. His head was covered with a startling thick mane of white hair, which he was proud of. Every few weeks, he had it carefully trimmed and styled by his daughter, Geraldine, who travelled in from the bush just to do it.

Shamengwa was a man of refinement, who prepared himself carefully to meet life every day. In the Ojibwa language that is spoken on our reservation, *owehzhee* is the way men get themselves up—pluck stray hairs, brush each tooth, make a precise part in their hair, and, these days, press a sharp crease down the front of their bluejeans—in order to show that, although the government has tried in every way possible to destroy their manhood, they are undefeatable. *Owehzhee.* We still look good and we know it. The old man was never seen in disarray, and yet there was more to it.

He played the fiddle. How he played the fiddle! Although his arm was so twisted and disfigured that his shirts had to be carefully altered and pinned to accommodate the gnarled shape, he had agility in that arm, even strength. Ever since he was very young, Shamengwa had, with the aid of a white silk scarf, tied his elbow into a position that allowed the elegant hand and fingers at the end of the damaged arm full play across the fiddle's strings. With his other hand, he drew the bow. When I try to explain the sound he made, I come to some trouble with words. Inside became outside when Shamengwa played music. Yet inside to outside does not half sum it up. The music was more than music—at least, more than what we are used to hearing. The sound connected instantly with something deep and joyous. Those powerful moments of true knowledge which we paper over with daily life. The music tapped our terrors, too. Things we'd lived through and wanted never to repeat. Shredded imaginings, unadmitted longings, fear, and also surprising pleasures. We can't live at that pitch. But, every so often, something shatters like ice, and we fall into the river of our own existence. We are aware. This realization was in the music, somehow, or in the way Shamengwa played it.

Thus Shamengwa wasn't wanted at every party. The wild joy his jigs and reels brought forth might just as easily send people crashing onto the rocks of their roughest memories and they'd end up stunned and addled or crying in their beer. So it is. People's emotions often turn on them. Geraldine, a dedicated, headstrong woman who six years back had borne a baby, dumped its father, and earned a degree in education, sometimes drove Shamengwa to fiddling contests, where he could perform in more of a concert setting. He even won awards, prizes of the cheap sort given at local musical contests—engraved plaques and small tin cups set on plastic pedestals. These he placed on a triangular scrap of shelf high in one corner of his house. The awards were never dusted, and sometimes, when his grandchild asked him to take them down for her to play with, they came apart. Shamengwa didn't care. He was, however, fanatical about his violin.

He treated this instrument with the reverence we accord our drums, which are considered living beings and require from us food, water, shelter, and love. He fussed over it, stroked it clean with a soft cotton handkerchief, laid it carefully away in the cupboard every night in a leather case that he kept as well polished as his shoes. The case was lined with velvet that had been faded by time from a heavy blood red to a pallid and streaked violet. I don't know violins, but his was thought to be exceptionally beautiful; it was generally understood to be old and quite valuable, too. So when Geraldine came to trim her father's hair one morning and found him on the floor, his good hand bound behind his back, his ankles tied, she was not surprised to see the lock of the cupboard smashed and the violin gone.

I am a tribal judge, and things come to me through the grapevine of the court system or the tribal police. Gossip, rumors, scuttlebutt, B.S., or just flawed information. I always tune in, and I even take notes on what I hear around. It's sometimes wrong, or exaggerated, but just as often it contains a germ of useful truth. In this case, for instance, the name Corwin Peace was on people's lips, although there was no direct evidence that he had committed the crime.

Corwin was one of those I see again and again. A bad thing waiting for a worse thing to happen. A mistake, but one that we kept trying to salvage, because he was so young. Some thought he had no redeeming value whatsoever. A sociopath. A clever manipulator, who drugged himself dangerous each weekend. Others pitied him and blamed his behavior on his mother's drinking. F.A.E. F.A.S. A.D.D. He wore those initials after his name the way educated people append their degrees. Still others thought they saw something in him that could be saved—perhaps the most dangerous idea of all. He was a petty dealer with a string of girlfriends. He was, unfortunately, good-looking, with the features of an Edward Curtis subject, though the crack and vodka were beginning to make him puffy.

Drugs now travel the old fur-trade routes, and where once Corwin would have sat high on a bale of buffalo robes and sung travelling songs to the screeching of an oxcart, now he drove a 1991 Impala with hubcaps missing and its back end

WYNN BULLOCK "STARK TREE" (1956), © 2002 BFPLLC / LAURENCE MILLER GALLERY

dragging. He drove it hard and he drove it all cranked up, but he was rarely caught, because he travelled such erratic hours. He drove without a license—it had long ago been taken from him. D.U.I. And he was always looking for money—scamming, betting, shooting pool, even now and then working a job that, horrifyingly, put him on the other side of a counter frying Chinese chicken strips. He was one of those whom I kept track of because I imagined I'd be seeing the full down-arcing shape of his life's trajectory. I wanted to make certain that if I had to put him away I could do it and sleep well that same night. So far, he had confirmed this.

As the days passed, Corwin lay low and picked up his job at the deep fryer. He made one of those rallying attempts that gave heart to so many of his would-be saviors. He straightened out, stayed sober, used his best manners, and when questioned was convincingly hopeful about his prospects and affable about his failures. "I'm a jackass," he admitted, "but I never sank so low as to rip off the old man's fiddle."

Yet he had, of course. And, while we waited for him to make his move, there was the old man, who quickly began to fail. I had not realized how much I loved to hear him play—sometimes out on his scrubby back lawn after dusk, sometimes at those little concerts, and other times just for groups of people who would gather round. After weeks had passed, a dull spot opened and I ached with surprising poignance for Shamengwa's loss, which I honestly shared, so that I had to seek him out and sit with him as if it would help to mourn the absence of his music together. I wanted to know, too, whether, if the violin did not turn up, we could get together and buy him a new, perhaps even better instrument. So I sat in Shamengwa's little front room one afternoon and tried to find an opening.

"Of course," I said, "we think we know who took your fiddle. We've got our eye on him."

Shamengwa swept his hair back with the one graceful hand and said, as he had many times, "I was struck from behind."

Where he'd hit the ground, his cheekbone had split and the white of his eye was an angry red. He moved with a stiff, pained slowness, the rigidity of a very old person. He lowered himself piece by piece into a padded brown rocking chair and gazed at me, or past me, really. I soon understood that although he spoke quietly and answered questions, he was not fully engaged in the conversation. In fact, he was only half present, and somewhat dishevelled, irritable as well, neither of which I'd ever seen in him before. His shirt was buttoned wrong, the plaid askew, and he hadn't shaved that morning. His breath was sour, and he didn't seem at all glad that I had come.

We sat together in a challenging silence until Geraldine brought two mugs

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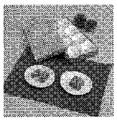

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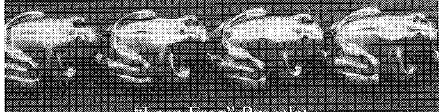

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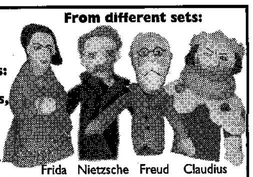

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of hot, strong, sugared tea and got another for herself. Shamengwa's hand shook as he lifted the cup, but he drank. His face cleared a bit as the tea went down, and I decided that there would be no better time to put forth my idea.

"Uncle," I said, "we would like to buy a new fiddle for you."

Shamengwa said nothing, but put down the cup and folded his hands in his lap. He looked past me and frowned in a thoughtful way.

"Wouldn't he like a new violin?" I appealed to Geraldine. She shook her head as if she were both annoyed with me and exasperated with her father. We sat in silence. I didn't know where to go from there. Shamengwa had leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes. I thought he might be trying to get rid of me. But I was stubborn and did not want to go. I wanted to hear Shamengwa's music again.

"Oh, tell him about it, Daddy," Geraldine said at last.

Shamengwa leaned forward and bent his head over his hands as though he were praying.

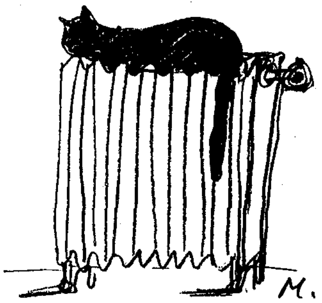
I relaxed now and understood that I was going to hear something. It was that breathless gathering moment I've known just before composure cracks, the witness breaks, the truth comes out. I am familiar with it, and although this was not exactly a confession, it was, as it turned out, something not generally known on the reservation.

II

My mother lost a baby boy to diphtheria when I was but four years old, Shamengwa said, and it was that loss that turned my mother to the Church. Before that, I remember my father playing chansons, reels, and jigs on his fiddle, but after the baby's death he put the fiddle down and took the Holy Communion. My mother out of grief became strict with my father, my older sister, and me. Where before we'd had a lively house that people liked to visit, now there was quiet. No wine and no music. We kept our voices down because our noise hurt, my mother said, and there was no laughing or teasing by my father, who had once been a dancing and hilarious man.

I don't believe my mother meant things to change so, but the sorrow she bore was beyond her strength. As though her heart, too, were buried underneath that small white headstone in the Catholic cemetery, she turned cold, turned away from the rest of us. Now that I am old and know the ways of grief, I understand she felt too much, loved too hard, and was afraid to lose us as she had lost my brother. But to a little boy these things are hidden. It only seemed to me that, along with that baby, I had lost her love. Her strong arms, her kisses, the clean soap smell of her face, her voice calming me—all of this was gone. She was like a statue in a church. Every so often we would find her in the kitchen, standing still, staring through the wall. At first we touched her clothes, petted her hands. My father kissed her, spoke gently into her ear, combed her hair into a shawl around her shoulders. Later, after we had given up, we just walked around her as you would a stump. My sister took up the cooking, and gradually we accepted that the lively, loving mother we had known wasn't going to return. We didn't try to coax her out. She spent most of her time at the church, her ivory-and-silver rosary draped over her right fist, her left hand wearing the beads smoother, smaller, until I thought one day for sure they would disappear between her fingers.

We lived right here then, but in those days trees and bush still surrounded us. There were no houses to the west. We pastured our horses where the Dairy Queen now stands. One day, while my family was in town and I was home with a cold, I became restless. I began to poke around, and soon enough I came across the fiddle that my mother had forced my father to stop playing. There it was. I was alone with it. I was only five or six years old, but I could balance a fiddle and I remembered how my father had used the bow. I got sound out of it all right, though nothing pleasing. The noise made my bones shiver. I put the fiddle back carefully, well before my parents came home, and climbed underneath my blankets when they walked into the yard. I pretended to sleep, not be-



cause I wanted to keep up the appearance of being sick but because I could not bear to return to the way things had been. Something had changed. Something had disrupted the nature of all that I knew. This deep thing had to do with the fiddle.

After that, I contrived, as often as I could, to stay alone in the house. As soon as everyone was gone I took the fiddle from its hiding place, and I tuned it to my own liking. I learned how to play it one string at a time, and I started to fit these sounds together. The sequence of notes made my brain itch. It became a torment for me to have to put away the fiddle when my family came home. Sometimes, if the wind was right, I sneaked the fiddle from the house and played out in the woods. I was always careful that the wind should carry my music away to the west, where there was no one to hear it. But one day the wind may have shifted. Or perhaps my mother's ears were more sensitive than my sister's and my father's. Because when I came back into the house I found her staring out the window, to the west. She was excited, breathing fast. Did you hear it? she cried out. Did you hear it? Terrified to be discovered, I said no. She was very agitated, and my father had a hard time calming her. After he finally got her to sleep, he sat at the table with his head in his hands. I tiptoed around the house, did the chores. I felt terrible not telling him that my music was what she'd heard. But now, as I look back, I consider my silence the first decision I made as a true musician. An artist. My playing was more important to me than my father's pain. It was that clear. I said nothing, but after that I was all the more sly and twice as secretive.

It was a question of survival, after all. If I had not found the music, I would have died of the silence. There are ways of being abandoned even when your parents are right there.

We had two cows, and I did the milking in the morning and evening. Lucky, because if my parents forgot to cook at least I had the milk. I can't say I really ever suffered from a stomach kind of hunger, but another kind of human hunger bit me. I was lonely. It was about that time that I received a terrible kick from the cow, an accident, as she was usually mild. A wasp sting, perhaps, caused her to lash out in surprise. She caught my arm and, although I had no way of knowing it, shattered the bone. Painful? Oh, for certain it was, but my parents did not think to take me to a doctor. They did not notice, I suppose. I did tell my father about it, but he only nodded, pretending that he had heard, and went back to whatever he was doing.

The pain in my arm kept me awake, and at night, when I couldn't distract myself, I moaned in my blankets by the stove. But worse was the uselessness of the arm in playing the fiddle. I tried to prop it up, but it fell like a rag doll's arm. I finally hit upon a solution. I started tying up my broken arm, just as I do now. I had, of course, no idea that it would heal that way and that as a result I would be considered a permanent cripple. I only knew that with the arm tied up I could play, and that playing saved my life. So I was, like most artists, deformed by my art. I was shaped.

School is where I got the name I carry now. Shamengwa, the black-and-orange butterfly. It was a joke on my "wing arm." Although a nun told me that a picture of a butterfly in a painting of Our Lady was meant to represent the Holy Spirit, I didn't like the name at first. My bashfulness about the shape of my arm caused me to avoid people even once I was older, and I made no friends. Human friends. My true friend was my fiddle, anyway, the only friend I really needed. And then I lost that friend.

My parents had gone to church, but there was on that winter's day some problem with the stove. Smoke had filled the nave at the start of Mass and everyone was sent straight home. When my mother and father arrived, I was deep into my playing. They listened, standing at the door rooted by the surprise of what they heard, for how long I do not know. I had not heard the door open and, with my eyes shut, had not seen the light thereby admitted. Finally, I noticed the cold breeze that swirled around me, turned, and we stared at one another with a shocked gravity that my father broke at last by asking, "How long?"

I did not answer, although I wanted to. *Seven years. Seven years!*

He led my mother in. They shut the door behind them. Then he said, in a voice of troubled softness, "Keep on."

So I played, and when I stopped he said nothing.

Discovered, I thought the worst was over. But the next morning, waking to a silence where I usually heard my father's

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noises, hearing a vacancy before I even knew it for sure, I understood that the worst was yet to come. My playing had woken something in him. That was the reason he left. But I don't know why he had to take the violin. When I saw that it was missing, all breath left me, all thought, all feeling. For a while after that I was the same as my mother. In our loss, we were cut off from the true, bright, normal routines of living. I might have stayed that way, joined my mother in the darkness from which she could not return. I might have lived on in that diminished form, if I had not had a dream.

The dream was simple. A voice. *Go to the lake and sit by the southern rock. Wait there. I will come to you.*

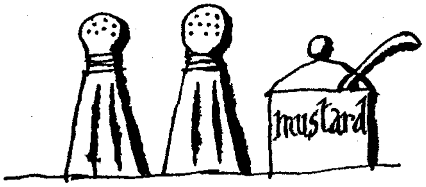
I decided to follow these instructions. I took my bedroll, a scrap of jerky, and a loaf of bannock, and sat myself down on the crackling lichen of the southern rock. That plate of stone jutted out into the water, which dropped off from its edges into a green-black depth. From that rock, I could see all that happened on the water. I put tobacco down for the spirits. All day, I sat there waiting. Flies bit me. The wind boomed in my ears. Nothing happened. I curled up when the light left and I slept. Stayed on the next morning. The next day, too. It was the first time that I had ever slept out on the shores, and I began to understand why people said of the lake that there was no end to it, even though it was bounded by rocks. There were rivers flowing in and flowing out, secret currents, six kinds of weather working on its surface and a hidden terrain beneath. Each wave washed in from somewhere unseen and washed out again to somewhere unknown. I saw birds, strange-feathered and unfamiliar, passing through on their way to somewhere else. Listening to the water, I was for the first time comforted by sounds other than my fiddle-playing. I let go. I thought I might just stay there forever, staring at the blue thread of the horizon. Nothing mattered. When a small bit of the horizon's thread detached, darkened, proceeded forward slowly, I observed it with only mild interest. The speck seemed to both advance and retreat. It wavered back and forth. I lost sight of it for long stretches, then it popped closer, over a wave.

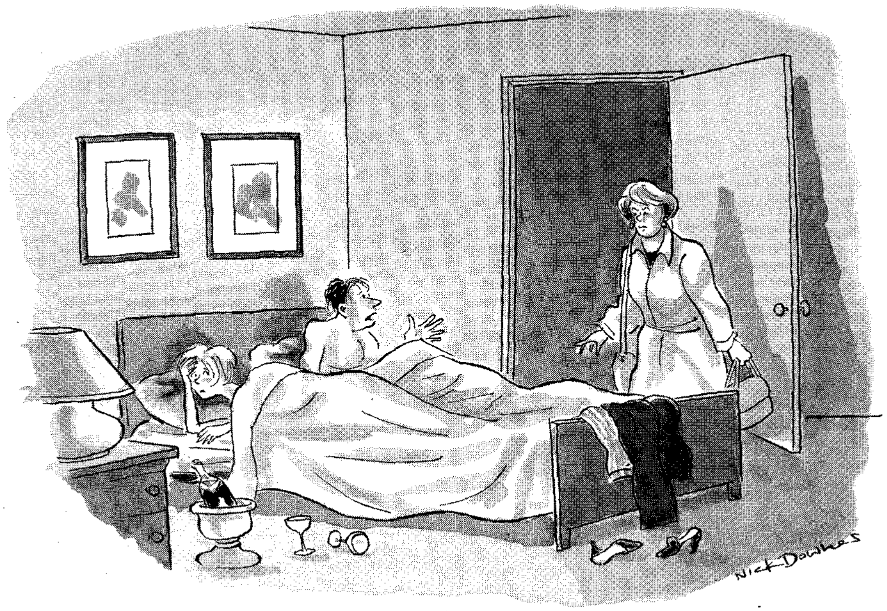
It was a canoe. But either the paddler was asleep in the bottom or the canoe was drifting. As it came nearer, I decided for sure that it must be adrift, it rode so lightly in the waves, nosing this way, then the other. But always, no matter how hesitantly, it ended up advancing straight toward the southern rock, straight toward me. I watched until I could clearly see there was nobody in it. Then the words of my dream returned. *I will come to you.* I dove in eagerly, swam for the canoe—I had learned, as boys do, to compensate for my arm, and although my stroke was peculiar, I was strong. I thought perhaps the canoe had been badly tied and slipped its mooring, but no rope trailed. Perhaps high waves had coaxed it off a beach where its owner had dragged it up, thinking it safe. I pushed the canoe in to shore, then pulled it up behind me, wedged it in a cleft between two rocks. Only then did I look inside. There, lashed to a crosspiece in the bow, was a black case of womanly shape that fastened on the side with two brass locks.

That is how my fiddle came to me, Shamengwa said, raising his head to look steadily at me. He smiled, shook his fine head, and spoke softly. And that is why no other fiddle will I play.

III

Corwin shut the door to his room. It wasn't really his room, but some people were letting him stay in their basement in return for several favors. Standing on a board propped on sawhorses, he pushed his outspread fingers against the panel of the false ceiling. He placed the panel to one side and groped up behind it among wires and underneath a pad of yellow fibreglass insulation, until he located the handle of the case. He bore it down to the piece of foam rubber that served as his mattress and through which, every night, he felt the hard cold of the concrete floor seep into his legs. He had taken the old man's fiddle because he needed money, but he hadn't thought much about where he would sell it or who would buy it. Then he had an inspiration. One of the women in the house went to Spirit Lake every weekend to stay with her boyfriend's family. He'd put the fiddle in the trunk and





"It's always the same argument with us, isn't it, Marge?"

• •

hitch along. They'd let him out at Miracle Village Mall, and he'd take the violin there and sell it to a music lover.

Corwin got out of the car and carried the violin into the mall. There are two kinds of people, he thought, the givers and the takers. I'm a taker. Render unto Corwin what is due him. His favorite movie of recent times was about a cop with such a twisted way of looking at the world that you couldn't tell if he was evil or good—you only knew that he could seize your mind with language. Corwin had a thing for language. He inhaled it from movies, rap and rock music, television. It rubbed around inside him, word against word. He thought he was writing poems sometimes in his thoughts, but the poems would not come out. The words stuck in odd configurations and made patterns that raced across the screen of his shut eyes and off the edge, down his temples and into the darkness of his neck. So when he walked through the air-lock doors into the warm cathedral-like space of the central food court, his brain was a mumble.

Taking a seat, peering at the distracted-looking shoppers, he quickly understood that none of them was likely to buy the fiddle. He walked into a music store and tried to show the instrument to the manager, who said only, "Nah, we don't take used." Corwin walked out again. He tried a few people. They shied away or turned him down flat.

"Gotta regroup," Corwin told himself, and went back to sit on the length of bench he had decided to call his own. That was where he got the idea that became a gold mine. He remembered a scene from a TV show, a clip of a musician in a city street. He was playing a saxophone or something of that sort, and at his feet there was an open instrument case. A woman stopped and smiled and threw a dollar in the case. Corwin took the violin out and laid the open case invitingly at his feet. He took the fiddle in one hand and drew the bow across the strings with the other. It made a terrible, strange sound. The screech echoed in the food court and several people raised their lips from the waxed-paper food wrappers to look at Corwin. He looked back at them, poised and frozen. It was a moment of drama—he had them. An audience. He had to act instantly or lose them. Instinctively, he gave a flowery, low bow, as though he were accepting an ovation. There were a few murmurs of amusement. Someone even applauded. These sounds acted on Corwin Peace at once, more powerfully than any drug he had tried. A surge of unfamiliar zeal filled him, and he took up the instrument again, threw back his hair, and began to play a swift, silent passage of music.

His mimicry was impeccable. Where had he learned it? He didn't know. He didn't touch the bow to the strings, but he played music all the same. Music ricocheted around between his ears. He could hardly keep up with what he heard. His body spilled over with drama. When the music in his head stopped, he dipped low and did the splits, which he'd learned from Prince videos. He held the violin and the bow overhead. Applause broke over him. A skein of dazzling sound.

They picked up Corwin Peace pretending to play the fiddle in a Fargo mall, and brought him to me. I have a great deal of latitude in sentencing. In spite of myself, I was intrigued by Corwin's unusual treatment of the instrument, and I decided to set a precedent. First, I cleared my decision with Shamengwa. Then I sentenced Corwin to apprentice himself with the old master. Six days a week, two hours each morning. Three hours of practice after work. He would either learn to play the violin or he would do time. In truth, I didn't know who was being punished, the boy or the old man. But at least now, from Shamengwa's house, we began to hear the violin again.

It was the middle of September on the reservation, the mornings chill, the afternoons warm, the leaves still green and thick in their final sweetness. All the hay was mowed. The wild rice was beaten flat. The radiators in the tribal offices went on at night, but by noon we had to open the windows to cool off. The woodsmoke of parching fires and the spent breeze of diesel entered then, and sometimes the squall of Corwin's music from down the hill. The first weeks were not promising. Then the days turned uniformly cold, we kept the windows shut, and until spring the only news of Corwin's progress came through his probation officer. I didn't expect much. It was not until the first hot afternoon in early May that I opened my window and actually heard Corwin playing.

"Not half bad," I said that night when I visited Shamengwa. "I listened to your student."

"He's clumsy as hell, but he's got the fire," Shamengwa said, touching his chest. I could tell that he was proud of Corwin, and I allowed myself to consider the possibility that something as idealistic as putting an old man and a hard-core juvenile delinquent together had worked, or hadn't, anyway, ended up a disaster.

The lessons and the relationship outlasted, in fact, the sentence. Fall came, and we closed the windows again. In spring, we opened them, and once or twice heard Corwin playing. Then Shamengwa died.

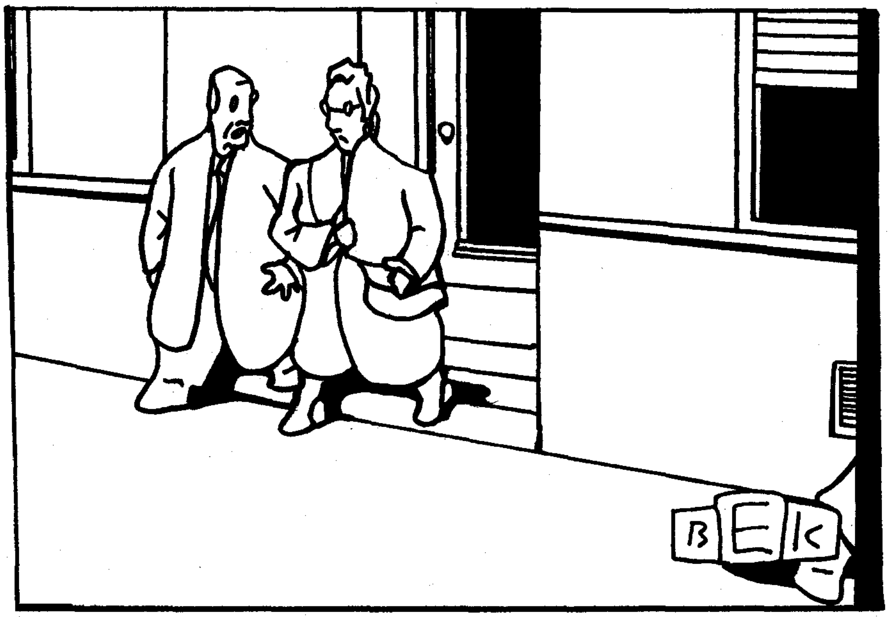
His was a peaceful death, the sort of death we used to pray to St. Joseph to give us all. He was asleep, his violin next to the bed, covers pulled to his chin. Found in the morning by Geraldine.

There was a large funeral with the usual viewing, at which people filed up to his body and tucked flowers and pipe tobacco and small tokens into Shamengwa's coffin to accompany him into the earth. Geraldine placed a monarch butterfly upon his shoulder. She said that she had found it that morning on the grille of her car. Halfway through the service, she stood up and took the violin from the coffin, where it had been tucked up close to her father.

"A few months ago, Dad told me that when he died I was to give this violin to Corwin Peace," she told everyone. "And so I'm offering it to him now. And I've already asked him to play us one of Dad's favorites today."

Corwin had been sitting in the back and now he walked up to the front, his shoulders hunched, hands shoved in his pockets. The sorrow in his face surprised me. It made me uneasy to see such a direct show of emotion in one who had been so volatile. But Corwin's feelings seemed directed once he took up the fiddle and began to play. He played a chanson everyone knew, a song typical of our people because it began tender and slow, then broke into a wild strangeness that pricked our pulses and strained our breath. Corwin played with passion, if not precision, and there was enough of the old man's energy in his music that by the time he'd finished everybody was in tears.

Then came the shock. Amid the dabbing of eyes and discreet nose-blowing, Corwin stood gazing into the coffin at his teacher, the violin dangling from one hand. Beside the coffin there was an ornate Communion rail. Corwin raised the violin high and smashed it on the rail, once, twice, three times, to do the job right. I was in the front pew, and I jumped from my seat as though I'd been prepared for something like this. I grasped Corwin's arm as he laid the violin carefully back beside Shamengwa, but then I let him go, for I recognized that his gesture was spent. My focus moved from Corwin to the violin itself, because I saw, sticking from its smashed wood, a roll of paper. I drew the paper out. It was old and covered with a stiff, antique flow of writing. The priest, somewhat shaken, began the service again. I put the roll of paper into my jacket pocket and returned to my seat. I didn't exactly forget to read it. There was just so much happening after the funeral, what with the windy burial and then the six-kinds-of-fry-bread supper in the Knights of Columbus Hall, that I didn't get the chance to sit still and concentrate. It was evening and I was at home, comfortable in my chair with a bright lamp turned on behind me, so the radiance fell over my shoulder, before I finally read what had been hidden in the violin for so many years.



"Do you want to be vaguely dissatisfied with Italian or Korean?"

IV

I, Baptiste Parentheau, also known as Billy Peace, leave to my brother Edwin this message, being a history of the violin which on this day of Our Lord August 20, 1897, I send out onto the waters to find him.

A recapitulation to begin with: Having read of LaFountaine's mission to the Iroquois, during which that priest avoided having his liver plucked out before his eyes by nimbly playing the flute, our own Father Jasprine thought it wise to learn to play a musical instrument before he ventured forth into the wastelands past the Lake of the Woods. Therefore, he set off with music as his protection. He studied and brought along his violin, a noble instrument, which he played less than adequately. If the truth were told, he'd have done better not to impose his slight talents on the Ojibwa. Yet, as he died young and left the violin to his altar boy, my father, I should say nothing against good Jasprine. I should, instead, be grateful for the joys his violin afforded my family. I should be happy in the hours that my father spent tuning and then playing the thing, and in the devotion that my brother and I eagerly gave to it. Yet, as things ended so hard between my brother and myself because of the instrument, I find myself imagining that we never knew the violin, that I'd never played its music or understood its voice. For when my father died he left the fiddle to both my brother Edwin and myself, with the stipulation that were we unable to decide who should have it, then we were to race for it as true sons of the great waters, by paddling our canoes.

When my brother and I heard this declaration read, we said nothing. There was nothing to say, for as much as it was true that we loved each other, we both wanted that violin. Each of us had given it years of practice, each of us had whispered into its hollow our sorrows and taken hold of its joys. That violin had soothed our wild hours, courted our wives. But now we were done with the passing of it back and forth. And if it had to belong to one of us two brothers I determined that it would be me.

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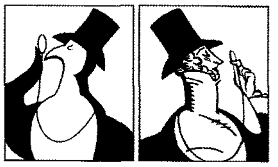

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its stories. That's who I
w. ♦

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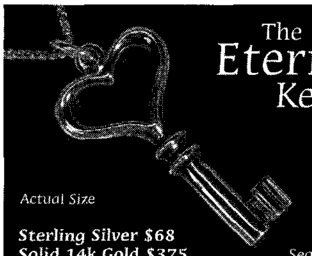

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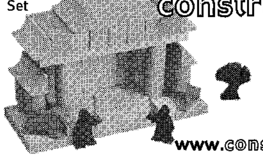

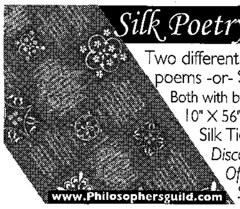

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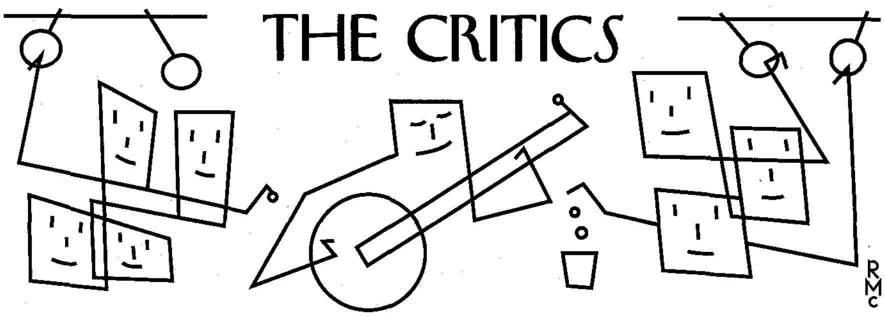


BOOKS

GROUP THINK

What does "Saturday Night Live" have in common with German philosophy?

BY MALCOLM GLADWELL

Lorne Michaels, the creator of "Saturday Night Live," was married to one of the show's writers, Rosie Shuster. One day when the show was still young, an assistant named Paula Davis went to Shuster's apartment in New York and found Dan Aykroyd getting out of her bed—which was puzzling, not just because Shuster was married to Michaels but because Aykroyd was supposedly seeing another member of the original "S.N.L." cast, Laraine Newman. Aykroyd and Gilda Radner had also been an item, back when the two of them worked for the Second City comedy troupe in Toronto, although by the time they got to New York they were just friends, in the way that everyone was friends with Radner. Second City was also where Aykroyd met John Belushi, because Belushi, who was a product of the Second City troupe in Chicago, came to Toronto to recruit for the "National Lampoon Radio Hour," which he starred in along with Radner and Bill Murray (who were also an item for a while). The writer Michael O'Donoghue (who famously voiced his aversion to the appearance of the Muppets on "S.N.L." by saying, "I don't write for felt") also came from *The National Lampoon*, as did another of the original writers, Anne Beatts (who was, in the impeccably ingrown logic of "S.N.L.," living with O'Donoghue). Chevy Chase came from a *National Lampoon* spin-off called "Lemmings," which also starred Belushi, doing his legendary Joe Cocker impersonation. Lorne Michaels hired Belushi after Radner, among others, insisted on it, and he hired Newman because he had worked with her on a Lily Tomlin special, and he hired Aykroyd because Michaels was also from Canada and knew him from the comedy scene there. When Aykroyd got the word, he came down from Toronto on his Harley.

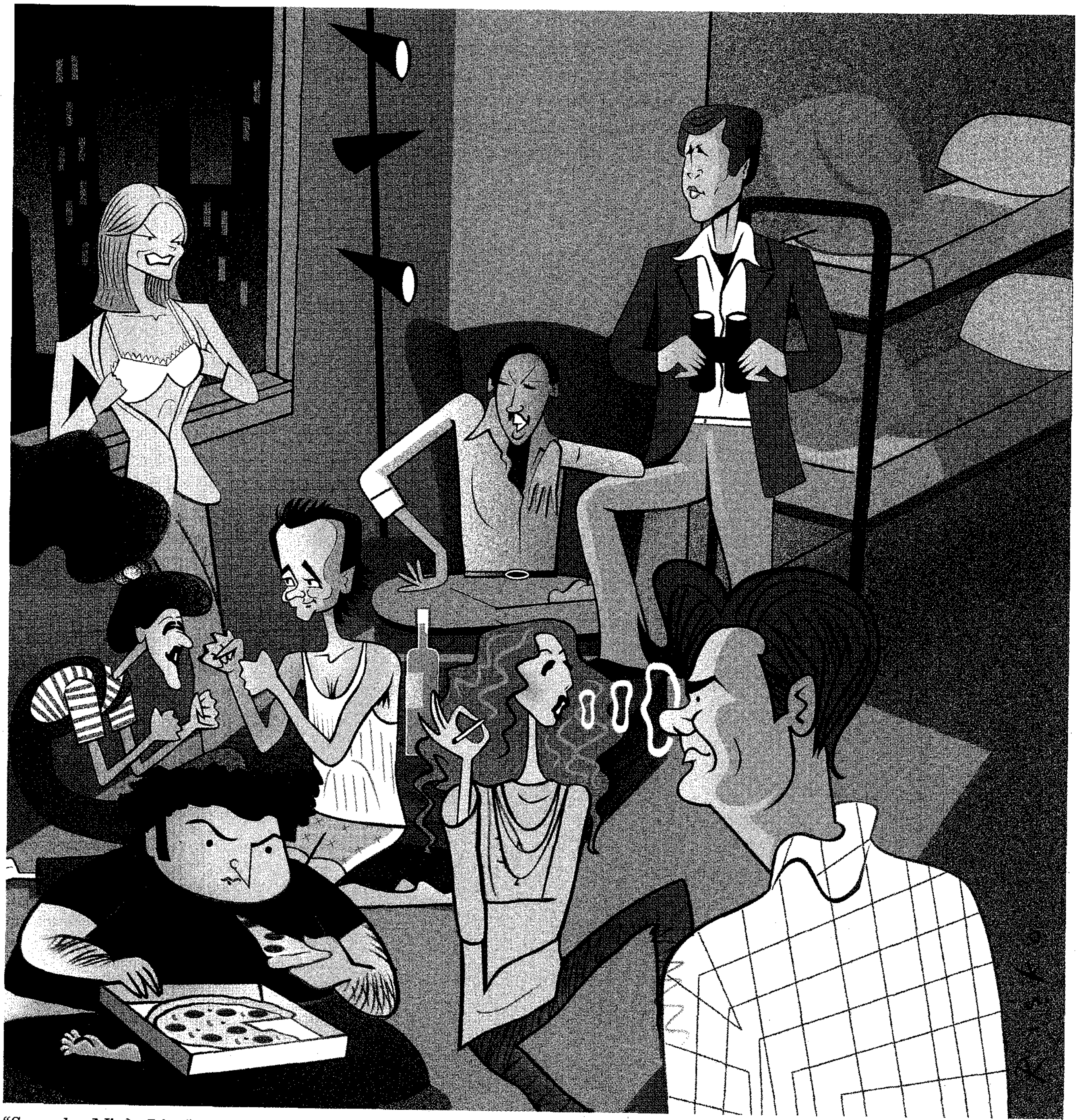
In the early days of "S.N.L.," as Tom Shales and James Andrew Miller tell us in "Live from New York" (Little, Brown; $25.95), everyone knew everyone and everyone was always in everyone else's business, and that fact goes a long way toward explaining the extraordinary chemistry among the show's cast. Belushi would stay overnight at people's apartments, and he was notorious for getting hungry in the middle of the night and leaving spaghetti-sauce imprints all over the kitchen, or setting fires by falling asleep with a lit joint. Radner would go to Jane Curtin's house and sit and watch Curtin and her husband, as if they were some strange species of mammal, and say things like "Oh, now you are going to turn the TV on together. How will you decide what to watch?" Newman would hang out at Radner's house, and Radner would be eating a gallon of ice cream and Newman would be snorting heroin. Then Radner would go to the bathroom to make herself vomit, and say, "I'm so full, I can't hear." And they would laugh. "There we were," Newman recalls, "practicing our illnesses together."

The place where they all really lived, though, was the "S.N.L." office, on the seventeenth floor of NBC headquarters, at Rockefeller Center. The staff turned it into a giant dormitory, installing bunk beds and fooling around in the dressing rooms and staying up all night. Monday night was the first meeting, where ideas were pitched. On Tuesday, the writing started after dinner and continued straight through the night. The first read-through took place on Wednesday at three in the afternoon. And then came blocking and rehearsals and revisions. "It was emotional," the writer Alan Zweibel tells Shales and Miller. "We were a colony. I don't mean this in a bad way, but we were Guyana on the seventeenth floor. We didn't go out. We stayed there. It was a stalag of some sort." Rosie Shuster remembers waking up at the office and then going outside with Aykroyd, to "walk each other like dogs around 30 Rock just to get a little fresh air." On Saturdays, after the taping was finished, the cast would head downtown to a storefront that Belushi and Aykroyd had rented and dubbed the Blues Bar. It was a cheerless dive, with rats and crumbling walls and peeling paint and the filthiest toilets in all of New York. But did anyone care? "It was the end of the week and, well, you were psyched," Shuster recalls. "It was like you were buzzing, you'd get turbocharged from the intense effort of it, and then there's like adrenal burnout later. I remember sleeping at the Blues Bar, you know, as the light broke." Sometimes it went even later. "I remember rolling down the armor at the Blues Bar and closing the building at eleven o'clock Sunday morning—you know, when it was at its height—and saying good morning to the cops and firemen," Aykroyd said. "S.N.L." was a television show, but it was also an adult fraternity house, united by bonds of drugs and sex and long hours and emotion and affection that went back years. "The only entrée to that boys club was basically by fucking somebody in the club," Anne Beatts tells Shales and Miller. "Which wasn't the reason you were fucking them necessarily. I mean, you didn't go 'Oh, I want to get into this, I think I'll have to have sex with this person.' It was just that if you were

ROBERT RISKO

drawn to funny people who were doing interesting things, then the only real way to get to do those things yourself was to make that connection."

We are inclined to think that genuine innovators are loners, that they do not need the social reinforcement the rest of us crave. But that's not how it works, whether it's television comedy or, for that matter, the more exalted realms of art and politics and ideas. In his book "The Sociology of Philosophies," Randall Collins finds in all of known history only three major thinkers who appeared on the scene by themselves: the first-century Taoist metaphysician Wang Ch'ung, the fourteenth-century Zen mystic Bassui Tokusho, and the fourteenth-century Arabic philosopher Ibn Khaldun. Everyone else who mattered was part of a movement, a school, a band of followers and disciples and mentors and rivals and friends who saw each other all the time and had long arguments over coffee and slept with one another's spouses. Freud may have been the founder of psychoanalysis, but it really began to take shape in 1902, when Alfred Adler, Wilhelm Stekel, Max Kahane, and Rudolf Reitler would gather in Freud's waiting room on Wednesdays, to eat strudel and talk about the unconscious. The neo-Confucian movement of the Sung dynasty in China revolved around the brothers Ch'eng Hao and Ch'eng I, their teacher Chou Tun-i, their father's cousin Chang Tsai, and, of course, their neighbor Shao Yung. Pissarro and Degas enrolled in the École des Beaux-Arts at the same time, then Pissarro met Monet and, later, Cézanne



"Saturday Night Live" was an adult fraternity house, united by bonds of drugs and sex and long hours and affection.

at the Académie Suisse, Manet met Degas at the Louvre, Monet befriended Renoir at Charles Gleyre's studio, and Renoir, in turn, met Pissarro and Cézanne and soon enough everyone was hanging out at the Café Guerbois on the Rue des Batignolles. Collins's point is not that innovation attracts groups but that innovation is found in groups: that it tends to arise out of social interaction—conversation, validation, the intimacy of proximity, and the look in your listener's eye that tells you you're onto something. German Idealism, he notes, centered on Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. Why? Because they all lived together in the same house. "Fichte takes the early lead," Collins writes,

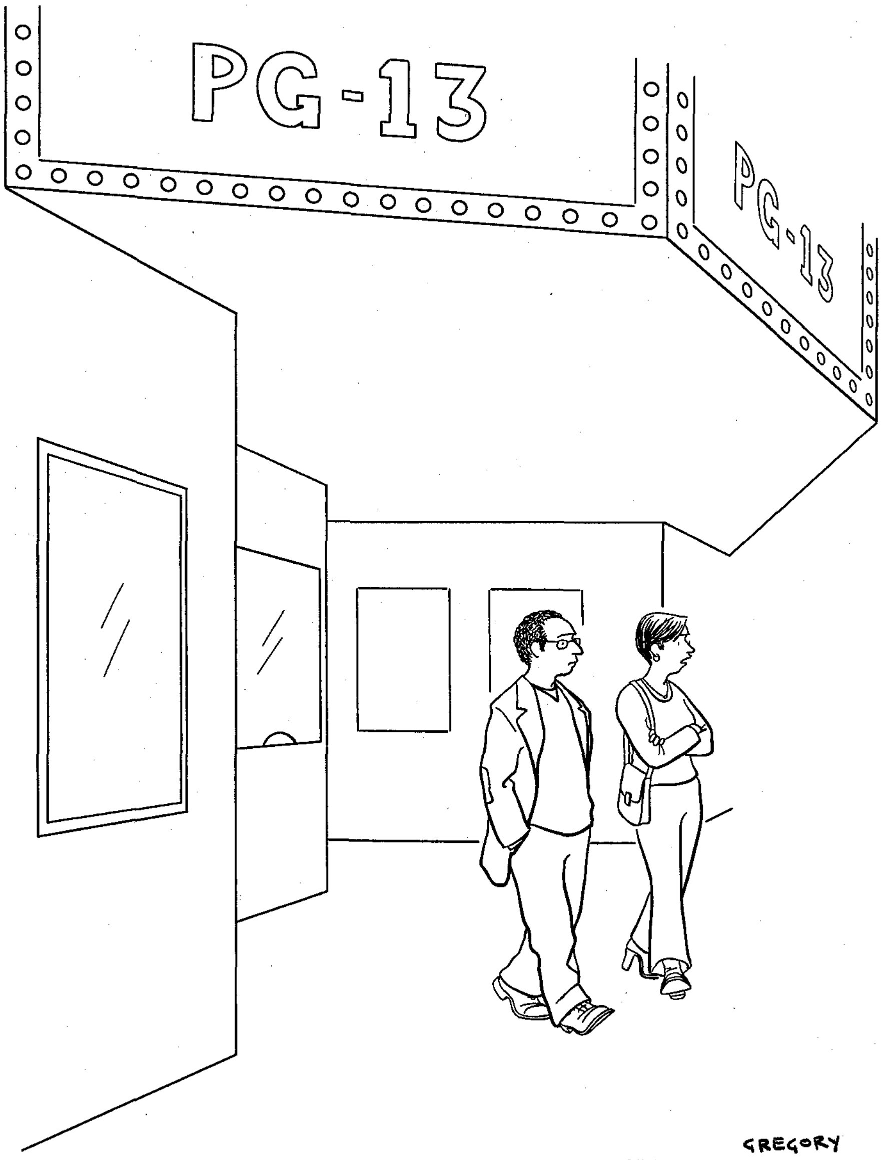
> inspiring the others on a visit while they are young students at Tübingen in the 1790s, then turning Jena into a center for the philosophical movement to which a stream of the soon-to-be-eminent congregate; then on to Dresden in the heady years 1799-1800 to live with the Romantic circle of the Schlegel brothers (where August Schlegel's wife, Caroline, has an affair with Schelling, followed later by a scandalous divorce and remarriage). Fichte moves on to Berlin, allying with Schleiermacher (also of the Romantic circle) and with Humboldt to establish the new-style university; here Hegel eventually comes and founds his school, and Schopenhauer lectures fruitlessly in competition.

There is a wonderful illustration of this social dimension of innovation in Jenny Uglow's new book, "The Lunar Men" (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $30), which is the story of a remarkable group of friends in Birmingham in the mid-eighteenth century. Their leader was Erasmus Darwin, a physician, inventor, and scientist, who began thinking about evolution a full fifty years before his grandson Charles. Darwin met, through his medical practice, an industrialist named Mathew Boulton and, later, his partner James Watt, the steam-engine pioneer. They, in turn, got to know Josiah Wedgwood, he of the famous pottery, and Joseph Priestley, the preacher who isolated oxygen and became known as one of history's great chemists, and the industrialist Samuel Galton (whose son married Darwin's daughter and produced the legendary nineteenth-century polymath Francis Galton), and the innovative glass-and-chemicals entrepreneur James Keir, and on and on. They called themselves the Lunar Society because they arranged to meet at each full moon, when they would get together in the early afternoon to eat, piling the table high, Uglow tells us, with wine and "fish and capons, Cheddar and Stilton, pies and syllabubs." Their children played underfoot. Their wives chatted in the other room, and the Lunar men talked well into the night, clearing the table to make room for their models and plans and instruments. "They developed their own cryptic, playful language and Darwin, in particular, liked to phrase things as puzzles—like the charades and poetic word games people used to play," Uglow writes. "Even though they were down-to-earth champions of reason, a part of the delight was to feel they were unlocking esoteric secrets, exploring transmutations like alchemists of old."

When they were not meeting, they were writing to each other with words of encouragement or advice or excitement. This was truly—in a phrase that is invariably and unthinkingly used in the pejorative—a mutual-admiration society. "Their inquiries ranged over the whole spectrum, from astronomy and optics to fossils and ferns," Uglow tells us, and she goes on:

> One person's passion—be it carriages, steam, minerals, chemistry, clocks—fired all the others. There was no neat separation of subjects. Letters between [William] Small and Watt were a kaleidoscope of invention and ideas, touching on steam-engines and cylinders; cobalt as a semi-metal; how to boil down copal, the resin of tropical trees, for varnish; lenses and clocks and colours for enamels; alkali and canals; acids and vapours—as well as the boil on Watt's nose.

What were they doing? Darwin, in a lovely phrase, called it "philosophi-



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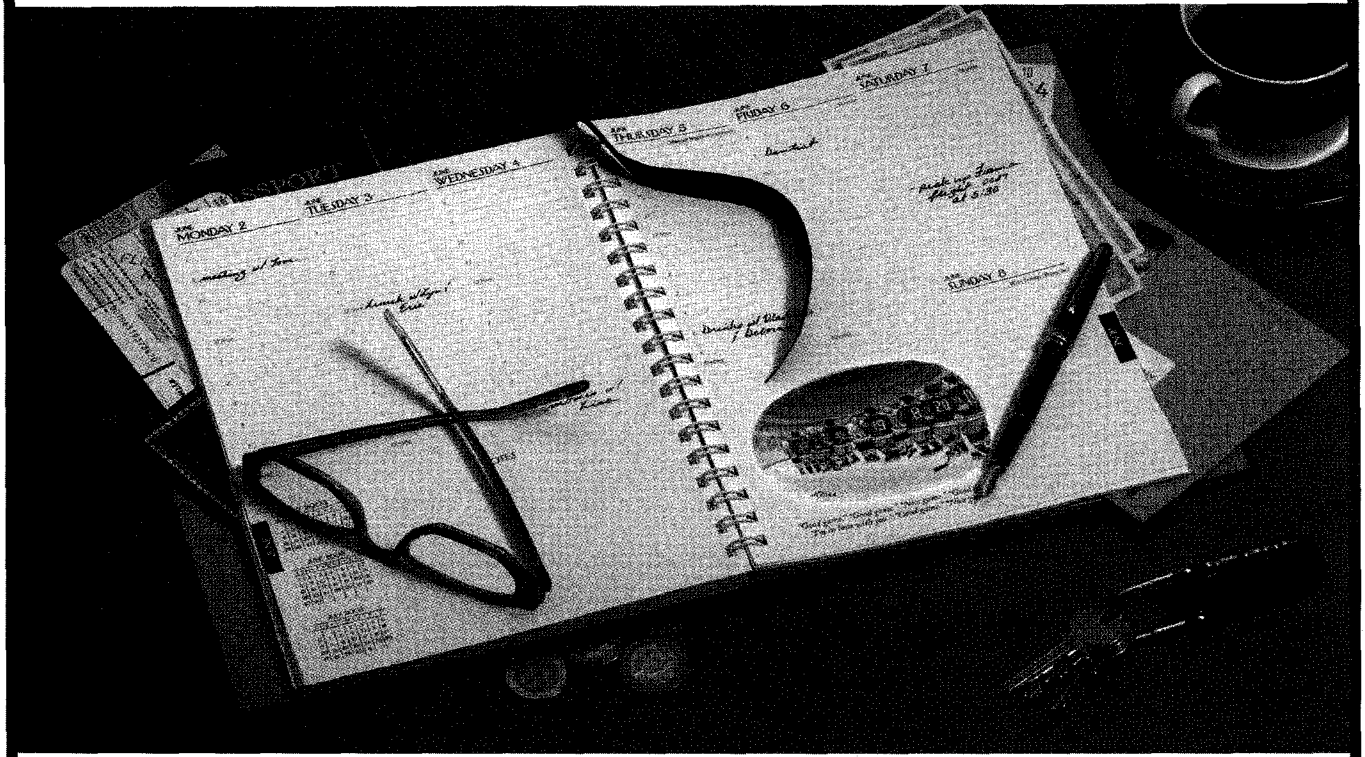

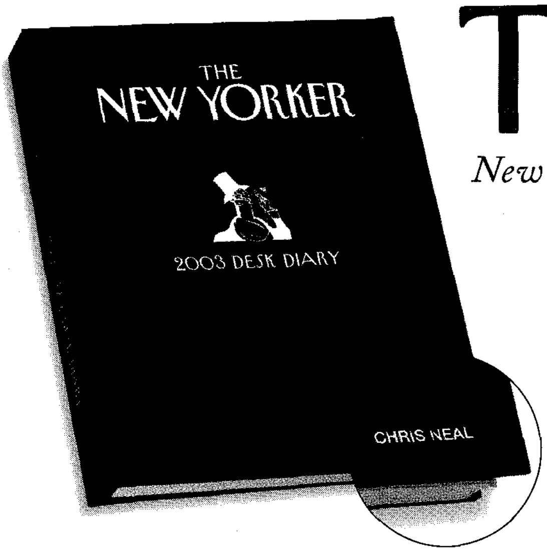

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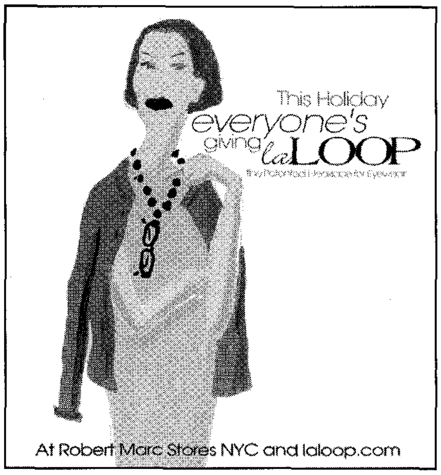

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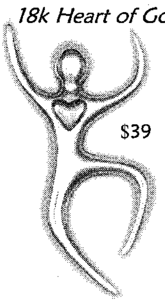

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cal laughing," which was his way of saying that those who depart from cultural or intellectual consensus need people to walk beside them and laugh with them to give them confidence. But there's more to it than that. One of the peculiar features of group dynamics is that clusters of people will come to decisions that are far more extreme than any individual member would have come to on his own. People compete with each other and egg each other on, showboat and grandstand; and along the way they often lose sight of what they truly believed when the meeting began. Typically, this is considered a bad thing, because it means that groups formed explicitly to find middle ground often end up someplace far away. But at times this quality turns out to be tremendously productive, because, after all, losing sight of what you truly believed when the meeting began is one way of defining innovation.

Uglow tells us, for instance, that the Lunar men were active in the campaign against slavery. Wedgwood, Watt, and Darwin pushed for the building of canals, to improve transportation. Priestley came up with soda water and the rubber eraser, and James Keir was the man who figured out how to mass-produce soap, eventually building a twenty-acre soapworks in Tipton that produced a million pounds of soap a year. Here, surely, are all the hallmarks of group distortion. Somebody comes up with an ambitious plan for canals, and someone else tries to top that by building a really big soap factory, and in that feverish atmosphere someone else decides to top them all with the idea that what they should really be doing is fighting slavery.

Uglow's book reveals how simplistic our view of groups really is. We divide them into cults and clubs, and dismiss the former for their insularity and the latter for their banality. The cult is the place where, cut off from your peers, you become crazy. The club is the place where, surrounded by your peers, you become boring. Yet if you can combine the best of those two states—the right kind of insularity with the right kind of homogeneity—you create an environment both safe enough and stimulating enough to make great thoughts possible. You get Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, and a revolution in Western philosophy. You get Darwin, Watt, Wedgwood, and Priestley, and the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution. And sometimes, on a more modest level, you get a bunch of people goofing around and bringing a new kind of comedy to network television.

One of "S.N.L." 's forerunners was a comedy troupe based in San Francisco called the Committee. The Committee's heyday was in the nineteen-sixties, and its humor had the distinctive political bite of that period. In one of the group's memorable sketches, the actor Larry Hankin played a condemned prisoner being led to the electric chair by a warden, a priest, and a prison guard. Hankin was strapped in and the switch was thrown—and nothing happened. Hankin started to become abusive, and the three men huddled briefly together. Then, as Tony Hendra recounts, in "Going Too Far," his history of "boomer humor":

> They confer and throw the switch again. *Still nothing. Hankin starts cackling with glee, doubly abusive. They throw it yet again. Nothing yet again. Hankin then demands to be set free*—he can't be executed more than once, they're a bunch of assholes, double jeopardy, nyah-nyah, etc., etc. Totally desperate, the three confer once more, check that they're alone in the cell, and kick Hankin to death.

Is that sketch funny? Some people thought so. When the Committee performed it at a benefit at the Vacaville prison, in California, the inmates laughed so hard they rioted. But others didn't, and even today it's clear that this humor is funny only to those who can appreciate the particular social and political sensibility of the Committee. We call new cultural or intellectual movements "circles" for a reason: the circle is a closed loop. You are either inside or outside. In "Live from New York," Lorne Michaels describes going to the White House to tape President Ford saying, "Live from New York, it's Saturday Night," the "S.N.L." intro: "We'd done two or three takes, and to relax him, I said to him—my sense of humor at the time—'Mr. President, if this works out, who knows where it will lead?' Which was completely lost on him." In another comic era, the fact that Ford did not laugh would be evidence of the joke's failure. But when Michaels says the joke "was completely lost on him" it isn't a disclaimer—it's the punch line. He said what he said because he knew Ford would not get it. As the writers of "Saturday Night Live" worked on sketches deep into the night, they were sustained by something like what sustained the Lunar men and the idealists in Tübingen—the feeling that they all spoke a private language.

To those on the inside, of course, nothing is funnier than an inside joke. But the real significance of inside jokes is what they mean for those who aren't on the inside. Laughing at a joke creates an incentive to join the joke-teller. But not laughing—not getting the joke—creates an even greater incentive. We all want to know what we're missing, and this is one of the ways that revolutions spread from the small groups that spawn them.

"One of Michaels's rules was, no groveling to the audience either in the studio or at home," Shales and Miller write. "The collective approach of the show's creators could be seen as a kind of arrogance, a stance of defiance that said in effect, 'We think this is funny, and if you don't, you're wrong.' . . . To viewers raised on TV that was forever cajoling, importuning, and talking down to them, the blunt and gutsy approach was refreshing, a virtual reinvention of the medium."

The successful inside joke, however, can never last. In "A Great Silly Grin" (Public Affairs; $27.50), a history of nineteen-sixties British satire, Humphrey Carpenter relates a routine done at the comedy club the Establishment early in the decade. The sketch was about the rebuilt Coventry Cathedral, which had been destroyed in the war, and the speaker was supposed to be the Cathedral's architect, Sir Basil Spence:

> First of all, of course, we owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the German people for making this whole project possible in the first place. Second, we owe a debt of gratitude to the people of Coventry itself, who when asked to choose between having a cathedral and having hospitals, schools and houses, plumped immediately (I'm glad to say) for the cathedral, recognizing, I think, the need of any community to have a place where the whole community can gather together and pray for such things as hospitals, schools and houses.

When that bit was first performed, many Englishmen would have found it offensive. Now, of course, hardly anyone would. Mocking British establishment pieties is no longer an act of rebellion. It is the norm. Successful revolutions contain the seeds of their demise: they attract so many followers, eager to be in on the joke as well, that the circle breaks down. The inside becomes indistinguishable from the outside. The allure of exclusivity is gone.

At the same time, the special bonds that created the circle cannot last forever. Sooner or later, the people who slept together in every combination start to pair off. Those doing drugs together sober up (or die). Everyone starts going to bed at eleven o'clock, and bit by bit the intimacy that fuels innovation slips away. "I was involved with Gilda, yeah. I was in love with her," Aykroyd tells Shales and Miller. "We were friends, lovers, then friends again," and in a way that's the simplest and best explanation for the genius of the original "S.N.L." Today's cast is not less talented. It is simply more professional. "I think some people in the cast have fun crushes on other people, but nothing serious," Cheri Oteri, a cast member from the late nineteen-nineties, tells Shales and Miller, in what might well serve as the show's creative epitaph. "I guess we're kind of boring—no romances, no drugs. I had an audition once with somebody who used to work here. He's very, very big in the business now. And as soon as I went in for the audition, he went, 'Hey, you guys still doing coke over at SNL?' Because back when he was here, they were doing it. What *are* we doing, for crying out loud? Oh yeah. Thinking up characters." ♦

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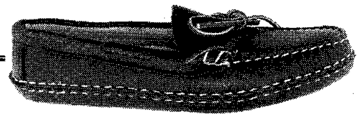

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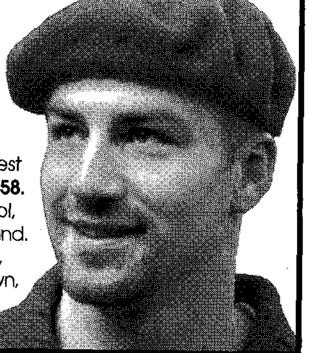

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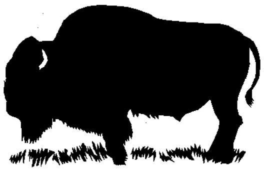

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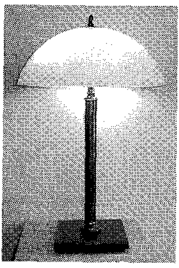

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BOOKS

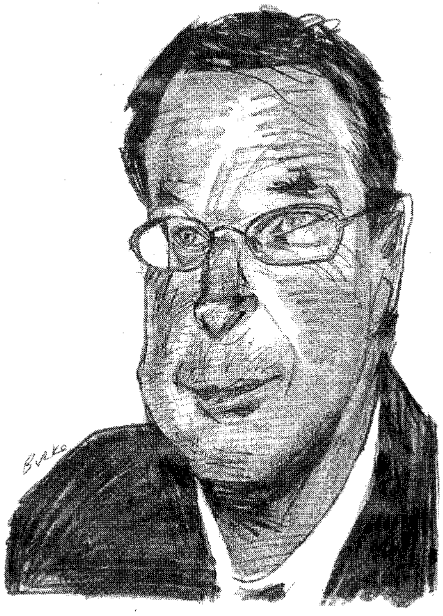
DUST DEVILS

In Michael Crichton's new novel, the villains are very small and very hungry.

BY OLIVER MORTON

As the hero of Michael Crichton's "Prey" (HarperCollins; $26.95) is delivered by helicopter to a remote laboratory in the Nevada desert, readers may well feel that they've made this trip before. People in Crichton's books are always being flown to stage-set-like destinations in isolated places: lost cities in the Congo, spacecraft crash sites in the South Pacific, raptor-ridden theme parks off Costa Rica. At the end of the ride, one can count on finding a nerdy and fractious team facing a fast-moving technological crisis, a number of computer screens (whose displays will be reproduced typographically, for authenticity), and the need to run around, moving from one purportedly safe place to another over hostile ground. One can expect at least some team members to be skilled in the use of the aforementioned computers and to have an academic background in something like psychology or animal behavior, which will prove useful later on. Team members who are greedy for money or power will meet a nasty end, possibly one involving pecking.

So when Jack Forman—lapsed animal behaviorist, unfairly sacked software executive, and the book's narrator—gets his copter ride to the Xymos corporation's research lab, we know that trouble is in store. To be fair, Jack has his suspicions, too. During the nicely observed and controlled pre-helicopter buildup, he has already discovered that Xymos, the secretive company for which his wife, Julia, a former venture capitalist, now works, has been having computer-related problems in its desert laboratory; he has also come to suspect that Julia is having an affair, and that her recent car accident was not what it seemed. And their baby has developed a head-to-toe eggplant coloration, which is never good. But Forman doesn't quite appreciate how bad things are about to get. Plainly, he has never read Crichton. For Crichton's work is a ceaseless chronicle of how bad it is when powerful things get out of control. What escapes control is usually a technological or scientific novelty. It will be too complex to fully understand, and it will evolve according to its own rules.



Michael Crichton

PHILIP BURKE

Nanotechnology, the source of Forman's mounting vexations, fulfills this role perfectly. The kind of nanotechnology that "Prey" explores is the as yet unrealized craft of making autonomous machines the size of molecules. The fact that such machines would be assembled by algorithms, built bit by bit as much as atom by atom, means that they would be a lot like computer software; yet the possibility that nanomachines might be able to reproduce themselves makes them rather biological. This liminal position, between software and life, makes nanotech a perfect subject for Crichton. Something a little like life and a little like a computer program is pretty much

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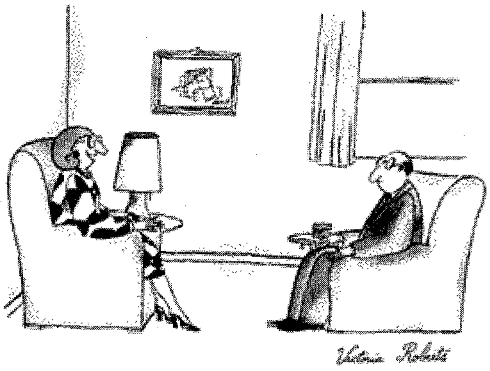

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guaranteed to go wrong. (Witness Al Gore.)

Even better, for Crichton's purposes, nanotechnology needs a lot of explaining. Crichton explains more things, with more conviction, than any other thriller writer around. The philosophical ruminations and product specifications are so deftly interspersed in the run, hide, blow-things-up stream of his narrative that, rather than interrupt the tension, they actually heighten it. The effect is like tight crosscutting in a film, although, perversely for such a frequently filmed author, it is impossible for a filmmaker to capture. A director can cut from scene to scene but not from scene to idea. Steven Spielberg nods toward Crichton's technique when he has one of the velociraptors in "Jurassic Park" stalk through an orientation film explaining its own creation, with projections of the creature's DNA sequences sliding over its grainy skin. But that's a joke, not a functional equivalent. What does make Crichton filmable is a happy knack for transforming big ideas into antagonists roughly the size and shape of a man. Velociraptors, killer gorillas, chip-headed cyborgs, gunslinging robots, cannibal Neanderthals, Demi Moore—these are the sort of things Hollywood knows how to make frightening.

For some people, such as Bill Joy, the chief scientist at Sun Microsystems, nanotechnology is frightening enough already. In an article published in *Wired* a couple of years ago, he described it as among the technologies that "are threatening to make humans an endangered species"—a sentiment that would make perfect back-cover copy for "Prey." One of his worries, and one of the most discussed and spectacular downsides of the idea, was the "gray goo problem." This gray goo would be a phalanx of nanomachines programmed to create yet more nanomachines until they run out of raw material—and, for raw material, read planet. It's a good nightmare but a poor premise for a Crichton novel, in that it's hard to anthropomorphize, and unlikely to be solved by running around. So Crichton has his nanomachines form themselves into discrete swarms that drift around the desert like six-foot dust devils, dark and lithe and threatening. They can disappear and reappear. They can insinuate themselves through door seals. They can be confused if you know how to do it (that's where the background in animal behavior fits in); but they also learn new tricks, just like the raptors. And they eat things.

From a technological perspective, Crichton's swarms are less than convincing. Their learning abilities are far-fetched, and the way that their constituent free-flying motes maneuver and communicate seems hard to square with the laws of physics. But in most other ways they are a success. They are at times genuinely eerie, and versatile enough to illustrate a range of worries about what nanotechnology might do. And their semi-ghostly, shape-shifting appearance will probably look very good on film. Indeed, Crichton's descriptions of how the molecular automatons move together in swarms read as though written for the programmers of Industrial Light & Magic, who will likely have to replicate them through computer animation: "Sooner or later, random environmental influences would cause enough units to act that they induced all the others to act, too. . . . The swirls should lose their coordinated appearance; there should be ragged wisps of particles rising into the air."

If the swarms have a drawback, it is that their implacable nastiness comes with no inner life. This will not be a problem for the special-effects people, whose programs do not, as yet, ask to be supplied with a motivation. But it limits the book's impact. The swarms aren't characters; they are created simply for opposition, like most of Crichton's adversaries, and the only satisfactory ending is for them to lose. "Prey" duly tells the story of a crisis contained.

This kind of resolution, too, is something of a Crichton trademark. He's forever describing things that could change the world—but don't. The Andromeda strain of space germs mutates into harmlessness and goes away; the lost city of the Congo is wiped from the map by lava; in "Sphere," the discoverers of the extraterrestrial artifact of untold power use that power to wish it into retroactive nonexistence. The fact that Crichton has no interest in showing what might have happened is what makes him a writer of suspense fiction, rather than of science fiction. A science-fiction writer would naturally want to see what would happen if the technologies stayed out of control (as most do), and might even want to ask whether the consequences would be all bad (as they often aren't). Might not free-range dinosaurs make Costa Rica an even more interesting place than it is today? What if nanoswarms offered promise as well as peril? "Prey," with its kill-them-all-and-get-out approach, is neither as frightening nor as fascinating as Greg Bear's novelette of twenty years ago, "Blood Music," in which the characters, transformed by the nanotechnology within them, become both far more and much less than human.

But then Crichton's essential conservatism may well be the secret of his success. You get a glimpse of something strange and unsettling, but you don't have to live with anything worse than the chance it might happen again. His goal is simply to convey a compelling and dangerous idea as quickly and noisily as possible. It's often said that Crichton's novels read like movies. In fact, they're more like trailers, previews of coming destructions. ♦

TANKA

Black-and-white Holsteins
Crowd downfield at feeding time,
Mingling their blotches.
It is like ice breaking up
In a dark, swollen river.

—*Richard Wilbur*

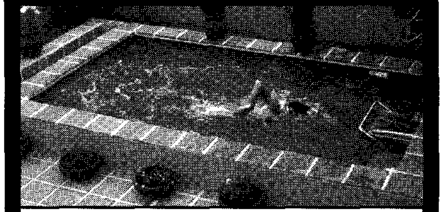
BRIEFLY NOTED

Baudolino, *by Umberto Eco, translated from the Italian by William Weaver (Harcourt; $27).* The hero of this phenomenal puzzler is one Baudolino, an inveterate liar, poet, and adventurer, whose charm and wit win him the favor of Frederick Barbarossa. Seeing a brilliant counsellor in the making (which he sorely needs), Frederick adopts him and packs him off to study in Paris, where, hunkered down with his drunken and licentious cronies, Baudolino weaves a grand, shimmering tale of a priest-king called Prester John, whose extraordinary purlieu is populated by beauteous maidens and beasts of every description. True or false? Baudolino and his band set out in the middle of the Third Crusade to find out. In this whimsical yet deadly earnest tale, Eco puts forth the question that perpetually beguiles him and with which he beguiles the rest of us: If a teller of tales tells us he's telling the truth, how can we know for sure what really happened?

Your Mouth Is Lovely, *by Nancy Richler (Ecco; $25.95).* This accomplished novel summons up the lost world of the Russian shtetls around the Pripet marshes in Ukraine, and shows how those communities were first changed and then annihilated by the events that led, ultimately, to the Russian Revolution. At the center of Richler's tale is Miriam Lev, whose mother drowned herself when she was a day old, and who at age six is taken in hand by her father's new wife, Tsila, a harsh, beautiful seamstress who teaches Miriam the alphabet and dreams of another life. After an ill-starred and painful series of events, Miriam ends up, at nineteen, in Siberia, having shot an officer of the Tsar at point-blank range. Miriam's hegira is told here as a letter to her own daughter, whom she hasn't seen since she gave birth to her, in prison. Richler's work recalls the stories of Isaac Babel, in which the knowable is charged with mystery.

Emma's War, *by Deborah Scroggins (Pantheon; $25).* In 1991, in the middle of a refugee crisis in southern Sudan, a twenty-seven-year-old British aid worker named Emma McCune scandalized the relief community by marrying a local guerrilla leader; the author describes Emma's brief career as a "First Lady-in-Waiting" as "the kind of surreal sideshow that often accompanies disasters." Formerly a champion of children's rights, Emma couldn't stop her husband from holding hundreds of adolescent boys in a squalid camp. Although she embraced the hardships of African life (bouts of malaria, water teeming with bilharzia), she was well-fed by local standards, eating fish that her husband's soldiers had stolen from a weaker, starving tribe. Meanwhile, Emma's fellow-expatriates grew less enchanted with her the more "African" she became—sick and constantly in need. Scroggins, a veteran reporter on Sudan, uses Emma's story to examine the failure of Western idealism in Africa. Emma turned out to be an incidental character: she died in 1993, in a traffic accident in Nairobi; the fighting continues.

England's Lost Houses, *by Giles Worsley (Aurum; $55).* When the magazine *Country Life* started, in 1897, featuring a British country house in each issue, the way of life such houses represented was at its height. In the following decades, however, as social change convulsed the country, more than a thousand stately homes were destroyed, and these photographs are in some cases the only pictorial record. Worsley's account avoids Brideshead-style sentimentality as it details both the various economic factors that caused the decline and the often surprisingly pragmatic attitudes of aristocratic owners. Yet the pictures leave a more forlorn impression. The magazine's custom of photographing houses empty of people makes them seem like ghosts already—a kaleidoscope of opulent drawing rooms, abandoned terraces, and silent staircases.



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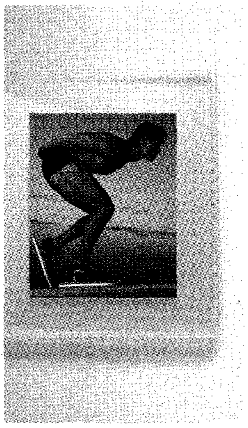

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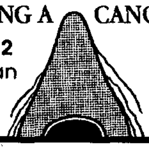

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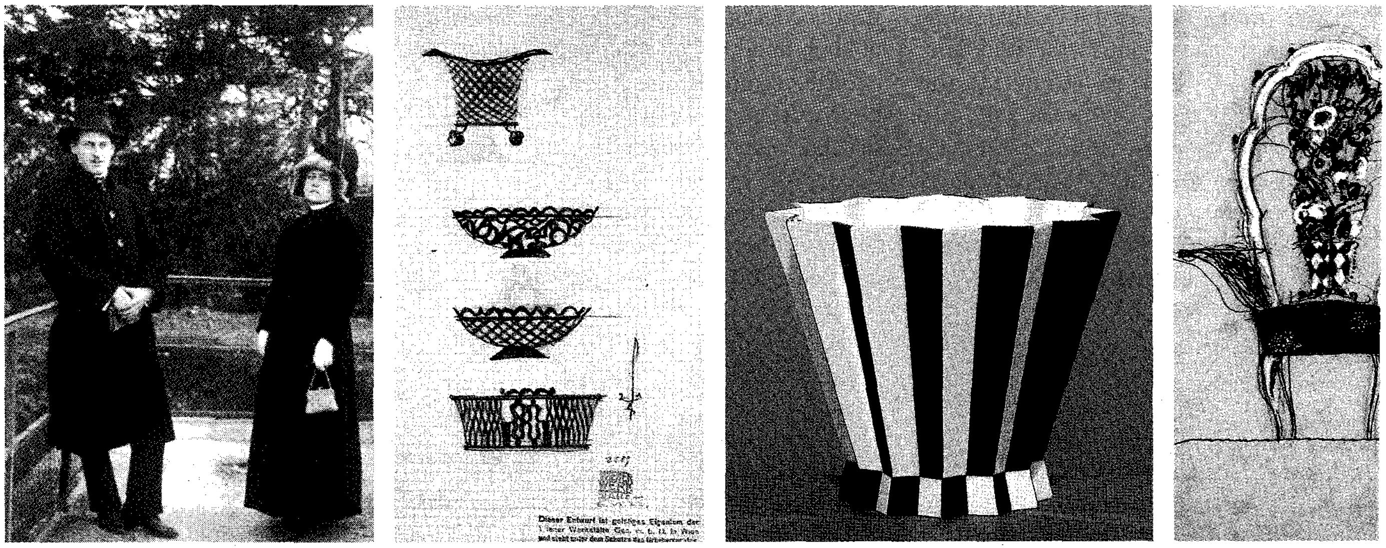
THE ART WORLD

PRESENT LAUGHTER

A forgotten master of embellishment.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

The most exciting retrospective of the current New York art season presents more than four hundred objects of craft and design—furniture, fabric, wallpaper, women's fashion, ceramics, glass, metalwork, and jewelry, along with works on paper—by a nearly forgotten Viennese named Dagobert Peche (pronounced "Pehka"), who died of cancer in 1923, at the age of thirty-six. The show, which runs through February 10th, fills the top floor of the Neue Galerie, the lustrous little museum of early-modern Austrian and German art on the Upper East Side which is barely a year old but already feels like an indispensable New York cynosure. A hallway hung with wallpaper samples—the first thing a visitor sees—commandeered my attention with the instantaneous authority of great art. Tensile linear and bold floral patterns overlie glowing, subtle colors, which dissolve the wall surface into deep radiance. The rhythmic play of the patterns is like visual music. I was stunned. What do I know or, normally, care about wallpaper? Especially wallpaper that, like everything else by the prodigiously inventive Peche, appears to banish all human values save that of gorgeous caprice.



Peche with his wife, Nelly, in Paris, in 1912. Designs (1912-22) for a centerpiece and bowls; a cachepot; a boudoir chair; a tableclot

LEFT TO RIGHT: PRIVATE COLLECTION (1); MAK (2,4,7); HISTORISCHES MUSEUM DER STADT WIEN (3): ALL IMAGES COURTESY NEUE GALERIE, N.Y.

Peche's achievement memorializes a now obscure period in which decorative indulgence was radical and combative. His career blazed in the grim years of the First World War, in Austria, when he became the guiding spirit of the vanguard design firm Wiener Werkstätte. He turned that institution and its leader, Josef Hoffmann, away from tendencies toward stripped-down formalism. The change was probably inevitable, given the retrenching tastes of high-bourgeois patrons in Austria at the time. Still, no one was prepared for Peche's crusading brilliance. In a famous polemic of 1908, "Ornament and Crime," the Viennese architect Adolf Loos had argued that ornate decoration was a grotesque relic of humanity's unwholesome past. For Peche, however, ornament was everything. He once outraged Loos by covering apples on a tree in gold leaf, thereby doing to nature roughly what his passion for embellishment had done to the architect's axiom of functionality. He exalted uselessness.

Peche made chairs whose legs are as massive as a rhinoceros's. One could sit on them, or not. One could also pour liquids into his glassware, but that would be beside the point, which is to enhance patterns with transparency. His hectically decorated display cases would overwhelm any objects inside them, except his own. Pity the poor flower that tries to maintain its natural aplomb in one of his exuberantly distended vases. His gilded mirror frames colonize the space around them with brainstorming zeal. His jewelry—ivory diadems!—announces the arrival of its wearer like a train's headlight in a tunnel. His bric-a-brac, in silver or gold, is intricate without fuss, as instantly satisfying as fireworks. When he drew, he often glued little gold stars onto the paper, perhaps with ironic self-approval. His sensuous and eclectic stylizations in every medium—a Pentecost of visual languages, including that of his particular hero, Aubrey Beardsley—might seem archly decadent, but they don't feel decadent. Peche's artistry vibrates with life. It radiates optimism—not for a utopian future but for the endurance of present joys.

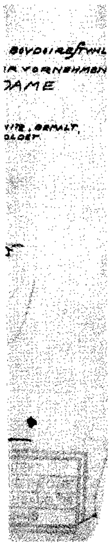
Peche's manner is intentionally insubstantial, even haphazard. Individual objects yield little to contemplation except wonder at the easy economy of their éclat. Consider the bird-shaped candy box, silver with coral eyes, that was chosen for the cover of the show's catalogue. (The image comments wittily on Peche's revival of ornament: the peacocklike fowl turns its head and gazes backward.) The piece's effect of dazzling opulence actually involves quick, simple procedures, such as the creasing and crimping of three cut-out, overlaid silver sheets to represent an elaborately feathered tail. One feels that almost anybody might have done it, for Peche's aim was never to advertise his skill. If God is in the details, his God is affable and easygoing.

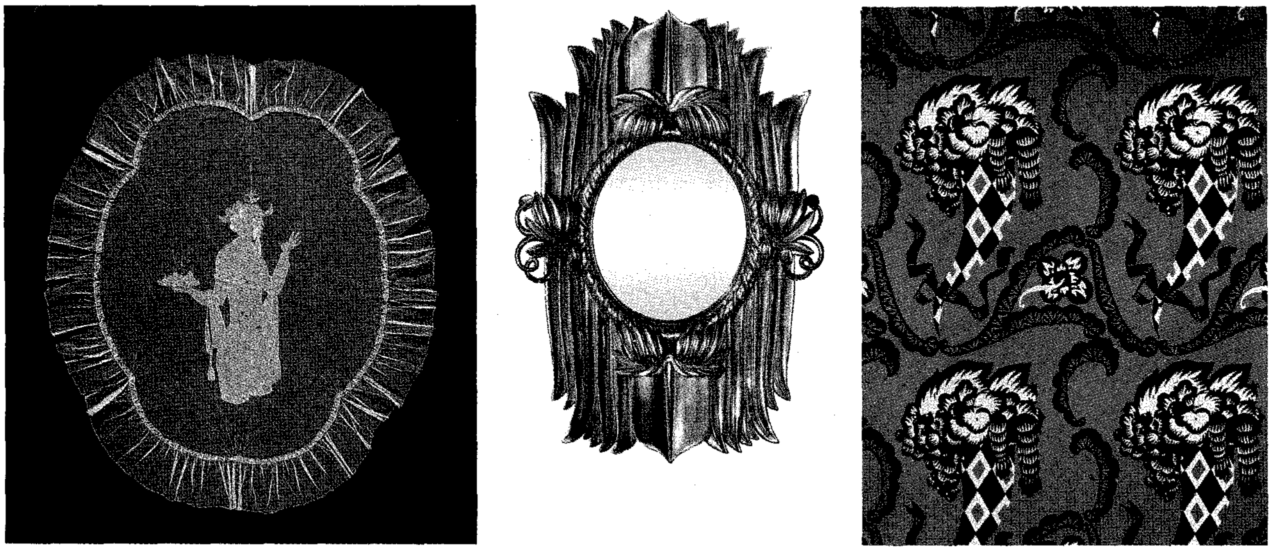
“He was pale and slender, filled with an unusual restlessness, always seemingly frail, a grumbler, melancholy and solitary,” the art historian Anne-Katrin Rossberg writes in the catalogue. Photographs of Peche show a half-hearted dandy, ill at ease in elegant getup. His father, who came from a family of military officers, was a notary; his mother was the daughter of a mill owner. He attended secondary school in Salzburg, whose treasures of the baroque and the rococo left lasting impressions. Juvenile drawings, including a delicately shaded, blocky house done when he was thirteen, bespeak a prodigy. His father vetoed his wish to be a painter and steered him toward architecture. After moving to Vienna, in 1906, he rebelled by operating between the two vocations, as a decorator. In 1911, he married a well-to-do older woman, and converted from Catholicism to Protestantism to mollify her father. They had two daughters. His romantic life seems to have been messy. The Neue Galerie's exhibition includes erotically charged, agitated billets-doux, one of which is a casual marvel of calligraphic layout. Within neat, airy rectangles of text, each letter is evenly spaced and set off by itself. Peche joined the Wiener Werkstätte in 1915. In 1917, he became the director of the firm's Zurich branch, but his importance went beyond that. The architect Philipp Häusler, the Werkstätte's administrative director, wrote to him saying, “the WW are YOU.”

Peche's relationship with Hoffmann was evidently both Oedipal and warm. Peche described his mentor's work as “great . . . imperious, imposing, self-confident,” but added that although it “demands that one bow down before it . . . we miss the expression of love, there is no sublimity, there is no grace.” Peche spoke from a conviction that his own work epitomized these softer virtues by sacrificing strict form to the poetic potential of materials. Hoffmann, by contrast, wanted “to create shapes, only shapes, that is what he is about”; if a material “resists, it is subdued by sheer force of will.” You can test the accuracy of Peche's criticism at the Neue Galerie, whose second floor holds, besides marvellous pictures by Klimt and Schiele, an exhibit of designs by Hoffmann, Koloman Moser, and other Werkstätte stylists. Hoffmann seemed to concur in the younger man's judgment. In his later work, he attempted—unsuccessfully, in Peche's view—to develop a more charming style. After Peche's death, Hoffmann said, “Not even every hundred years, at most perhaps every three hundred years, does a country see the birth of such a genius.”

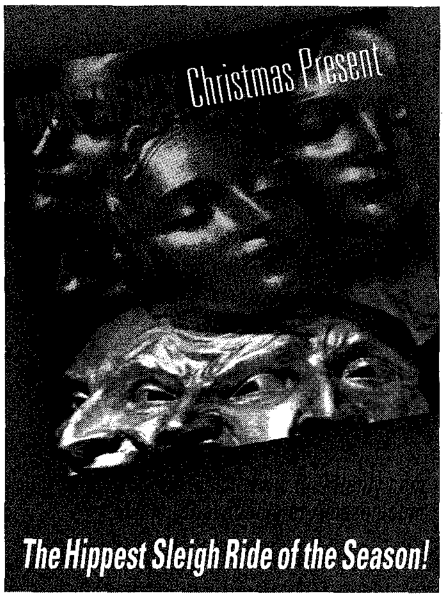
In 1922, Häusler reported that Peche was leading a “most unhealthy life, constantly lies in bed under a huge comforter, smokes fifty or sixty cigarettes a day, and tortures himself with the craziest and most destructive thoughts.” According to Häusler, Peche told his brother Kuno that he had decided to become a painter: “He was not happy with the work he had done so far, he considered all that Werkstätte production for a few wealthy people a mistake.” He had also become something of a populist, and he hoped to publish a design book “for crafts workshops everywhere.” Peche's tormented state is illuminating. A conscience had always informed the militant frivolity of his work. When he could no longer produce, it turned on him.

Design is inherently ethical, because it either affirms or contests the customs of its time. We think of modern design as promoting rigorous personal and social improvement. Peche's manner combined qualities—“rusticity and refinement,” in the words of one observer—that attack this position both from below and from above. No wonder his reputation got buried when modernism became the twentieth century's measure of good taste. But Peche is back, and this time he has critical argument on his side. We no longer believe in “progress.” Peche, creating flamboyant baubles in wartime, anticipated our disillusionment and its attendant problem: how to live right now, in ways that bless life as it happens to be. ♦





irror frame; and a wallpaper sample: A sense of ornament that vibrates with optimism.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MUSICAL EVENTS

CONSOLATIONS

The uncanny voice of Arvo Pärt.

BY ALEX ROSS

A few years ago, a man who faced a terminal diagnosis of cancer asked a friend to give him some compact disks so that he could have a little music to help him get through the night. Among the recordings that the friend sent was "Tabula Rasa," on the ECM label, which contained three works by the Estonian composer Arvo Pärt. A day or two later, the man called to thank his friend for the disks, and, especially, for the Pärt. In the last weeks of his life, he listened to practically nothing else.

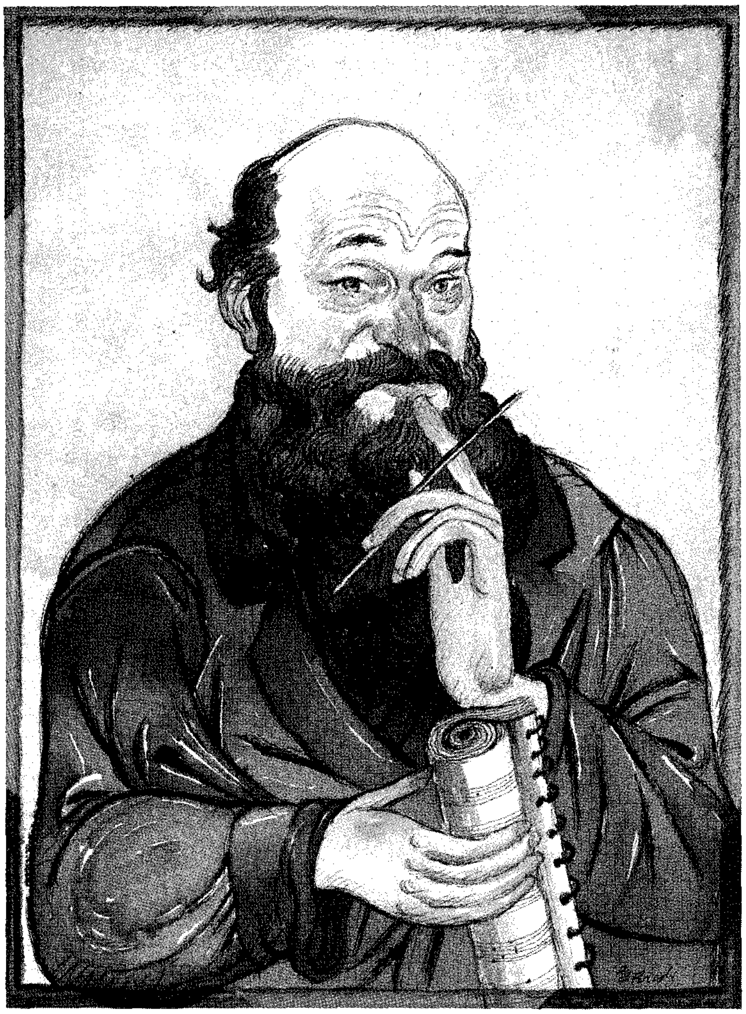
Several people have told me essentially this same story about the still, sad music of Pärt—how it became, for them or for others, a vehicle of solace. One or two such anecdotes seem sentimental; a series of them begins to suggest a slightly uncanny phenomenon. Patrick Giles, in an article for *Salon*, reported that when he worked as a volunteer for an AIDS organization, in the nineteen-eighties, he played "Tabula Rasa" for those facing the final onslaught of the disease, and they developed a peculiar, almost desperate attachment to it. Once, when Giles was away, the mother of one of the dying men called with an anxious query. "He keeps asking for 'angel music,'" she said. "What the hell is that?" The music in question was the second movement of "Tabula Rasa," in which a rustling arpeggio on a prepared piano leads into glacial chords of D minor.

According to the unsentimental evidence of record sales, Pärt's music reaches far beyond the conspiracy of connoisseurs who support most new classical music. He is a composer who speaks in hauntingly clear, familiar tones, yet he does not duplicate the music of the past. He has put his finger on something that is almost impossible to put into words—something to do with the power of music to obliterate the rigidities of space and time. One after the other, his chords silence the noise of the self, binding the mind to an eternal present. For this reason, anecdotes of listeners' experiences, whether extreme or mundane, may give a better account of the music than any analysis of its inner workings. For me, "Tabula Rasa" will always be a snowy New England afternoon in 1989, during which there was nothing in the world but this music and that snow.

Earlier this month, a festival called Music Around presented twenty-two of Pärt's works in various Scandinavian cities. The composer travelled from his home in Berlin to observe the event, settling into a hotel in Copenhagen. I talked to him there, in a smattering of English and German, at the hotel's restaurant.

Pärt is a gaunt man with a pale, gentle face and mournfully powerful eyes. His bald pate is balanced by a tightly curled beard of a few inches' length. He has been described as "monkish" so often that a German musicologist has undertaken a deconstruction of the term, but the word still springs to mind unbidden: he could pose for an icon of St. John Chrysostom, or another of the literary saints. Yet, when his large eyes fix on you, he becomes more worldly and formidable; his stare seems to ask, "Are you serious?" At times, he is unexpectedly impish, even antic. He needs few words to make himself understood, using a repertory of quasi-operatic gestures and clownish faces.

"My life is a river, and I am a boat being borne along the current," he told me. "I cannot relate to my life as a story, as a sequence of events, because I cannot get off the boat in order to see where I am. I do not see myself as moving forward or going backward." I asked him whether he believed in musical progress, in the idea of an avant-garde. He vigorously shook his head. "I do not know what this word 'progress' means, at least in the area of art. Progress in science can certainly be measured and described. But to talk about a particular style or a particular work as progressive or regressive is arbitrary, totally misleading. It reminds me a little of Brueghel's painting of the blind leading the blind. One man is tumbling down, his staff held out like a spear or sword in front of him, and the others are following behind him. They are all making progress, and they are all falling down. The story is found in the Bible. How many painters this word 'progress' has made blind! How many composers this word has made deaf! And they carried behind them *generations!*" He looked stricken for a moment, as if he had just seen a horror out of Bosch.



Pärt says, "My life is a river, and I am a boat borne along the current."

TULLIO PERICOLI

Pärt was born in 1935, in a small town in the Estonian countryside. According to Paul Hillier's study of the composer, he grew up playing an ancient grand piano that lacked a middle register, so that he made music only at extremes of high and low. He studied composition in the national conservatory, in Tallinn. He moved steadily through all the styles that were available to him, from neoclassicism to socialism and on to Western avant-garde techniques of serialism and chance. He even dipped into John Cage-ish happenings, once participating in a concert at which a violin somehow caught on fire.

Finally, in 1976, he turned inward, discovering a new, radically simplified language. "Tabula Rasa" was one of the first products of this style, which came to be called "tintinnabuli," after the Latin word for bell. In its basic form, it involves the interweaving of two voices, one of which moves by melodic steps while the other rotates through the pitches of a major or a minor chord. The method has something in common with the early minimalist pieces of Steve Reich, but the resemblance is better explained by the fact that both composers drew on the same ancient sources: polyphonic composers of the late medieval and early Renaissance periods.

The tintinnabuli works were also informed by an intense religiosity, flowing from Pärt's embrace of Russian Orthodoxy. This meditative strain contributed to his subsequent popularity in the nineteen-nineties, when records of Gregorian chant mysteriously showed up on the pop charts. But there was nothing fashionable about Pärt's choice of style back in the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic. The composer had already established himself as something of a maverick; his 1968 work "Credo," in which a prayerful choral arrangement of Bach's Prelude in C Major sounds defiantly in the middle of musical chaos, drew official censure. By the late seventies, as Pärt began to acquire international fame, he found that he was not permitted to travel freely abroad, and that his works were being taken off the market. In 1979, at a meeting of the Estonian Composers' Union, Pärt denounced official policy while wearing a longhaired wig. The following year, he was able to obtain an exit visa to Israel—his wife, Nora, is Jewish. Alfred Schnittke, who had played the prepared piano in the first Western performances of "Tabula Rasa," arranged for the Pärts to stay in Vienna, and they ended up settling in Berlin.

Pärt said of his early, "wild" years, "I was writing music in which there were many notes thrown down on the page like so." He made a scattering gesture with his hands. "Notes were being strewn about like coins or jewels. I was not guarding these notes as treasures. I was not holding them, one after another, in my hands. Every note is decisive, every note is telling." Yet, for all his love of spare, repetitive textures, he does not treasure the minimalist label that has been attached to him. "Two composers, Philip Glass and Steve Reich, changed the world at that time," he said. "I have great respect for them. Still, I am not a minimalist. I understand that music critics will always find categories for my works and put them away in suitable drawers, but to call me a 'holy minimalist' sounds a bit ridiculous." He cupped his ear and listened to the hollow air.

As Pärt and I talked, a pan-flute arrangement of the "Titanic" soundtrack was playing on the restaurant's loudspeakers. It played over and over, in an endless loop. Although Pärt asked the waitress to turn it down, it refused to go away. The juxtaposition was ironic, because this composer has sometimes been accused of writing background music—a higher Muzak for sensitive souls. His works have been used on movie soundtracks and in other suspect

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environments. The false association with New Age aesthetics has perhaps inadvertently been aided by the exquisite care that ECM takes in recording him. Since the mid-eighties, Manfred Eicher, ECM's longtime director and chief producer, has given Pärt's music a distinctive ambience, a sonic halo. Even the packaging of the disks, all crisp lines and monochromatic fields, is a beautiful exemplar of minimalist style.

Recordings tell only half the story, however. They remain two-dimensional experiences, whereas Pärt is intensely concerned with the positioning of music in space. It was actively stunning to hear his works in the airy, chilly churches of Copenhagen, where the music seemed to crystallize out of the air and become an organic, multivalent thing. The Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir, under Tõnu Kaljuste, and the Latvian Radio Choir, under Kaspars Putniņš, gave the music enormous immediacy: the voices buzzed against each other, then soared as one. Most commentators have overlooked the dramatic tension inherent in Pärt's work—the way an apparent state of equilibrium is undermined by one or two serpentine notes, or the way small harmonic shifts can turn into seismic shocks. When, in the choral work "Beatitudes," an intricately pivoting chain of modulations leads through twenty of the twenty-four major and minor chords, the effect is of a huge vista opening up from a narrow space. As happens so often, Pärt has found a precise musical image to explicate his chosen text: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven."

In recent years, Pärt has stretched his tintinnabulist idiom in order to accommodate a freer harmonic rhythm. He has set Latin, German, English, Spanish, and Old Slavonic texts, recalibrating his language to fit the demands of each. "Kanon Pokajanen," an eighty-minute-long setting of the Orthodox canon of repentance, mixes the rawness of folk ritual with the fastidiousness of theology. The English works, such as "Beatitudes" and "Litany," echo the soaring forms of Anglican hymns. "Como Cierva Sedienta," a Spanish-language setting of Psalms 42 and 43, has a strikingly vibrant, almost Fauvist orchestration and a richly ornamented vocal line; it is very nearly opulent. This recent work appears on ECM's latest Pärt disk, "Orient & Occident," which contains other intimations of new directions. The title piece, an elegy for strings, echoes the feverish intimacy of Benjamin Britten, whom Pärt reveres, while also forming unexpected links with Indian string writing and Arabic cantillation.

The composer acknowledged his latest tendencies with a guilty smile. "Yes," he said. "I got a little crazy, didn't I?" He mimed a gesture that suggested a flamenco dancer throwing tennis balls. The wild Pärt of the Estonian years, who mocked the authorities and played the holy fool, is still lurking below the surface. The austerity of his present style may really serve to hold the other self in check; one wonders how much turbulence lies deep within these chapels of sound, which come close to Bachian perfection. Often, in the spiritual sphere, faith hovers at the brink of disorder and sorrow.

At the end of our talk, I asked Pärt whether he felt lonely, both as a religious artist in a secular Western culture and as a classical composer in the kingdom of pop. He paused for a while, and the pan flutes filled the silence. "If loneliness brings bitterness and anger," he finally said, "then, I think, loneliness is a disease. We composers cannot brood, we cannot cultivate loneliness. Schubert, for example, never heard his symphonies in performance—they got no interest from publishers. But they are full of life. And his songs are nearer to Heaven than most music written for the church. He had the talent of love and the talent of compassion. Of course he was lonely, but his suffering gave out sweet nectar.

"We cannot know all the good people in the world," he went on. "Not many of the good people are composers. Twenty years ago, my friend Valentin Silvestrov, one of the greatest composers of our time, said that nowadays great music isn't made in concert palaces. Instead, it is created in lofts, basements, and garages. Here you are, with your feet in lukewarm water, and the pan flutes are making noise—"

He stopped, frustrated at the inability of either English or German to bring his image to life. He took a pen out of his pocket and put it in front of me, as if that would explain everything. "Schubert's pen," he said, "was fifty per cent ink, fifty per cent tears." ♦

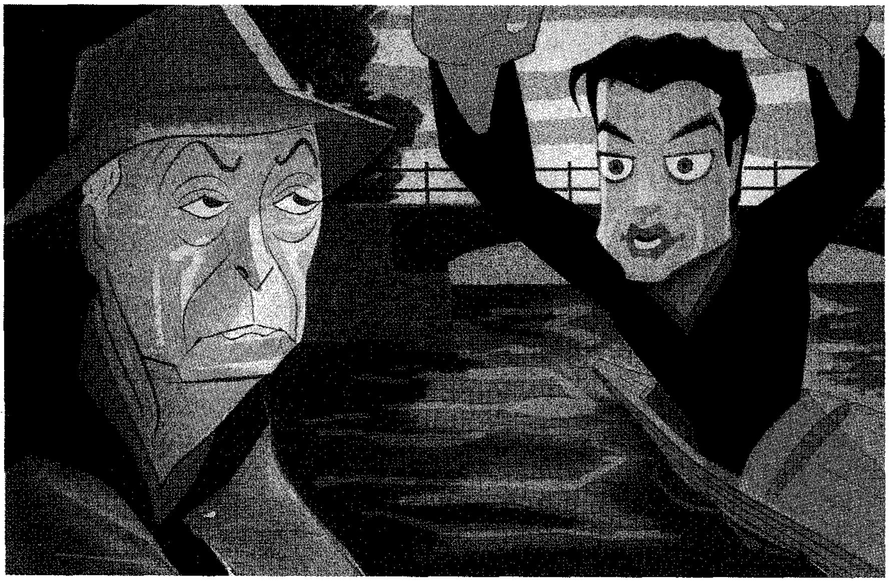
THE CURRENT CINEMA

LOVE AND WAR

"The Quiet American."

BY ANTHONY LANE

How do you transfigure Graham Greene for the screen? Many have grappled with the task, and, despite the occasional flesh wound, he has been treated fairly, if a little squarely—with far less mutilation, certainly, than someone like Henry James, whom Greene himself wrote about with such feeling, and who continues to be knifed at regular intervals by well-meaning producers. The best results with Greene were obtained by Carol Reed, who made "The Fallen Idol" and "The Third Man," although you could argue that, in the latter, the author's presence was outshadowed by Orson Welles.



Michael Caine and Brendan Fraser: Conflicting points of view.

ERIC PALMA

The latest effort is Phillip Noyce's "The Quiet American," adapted by Christopher Hampton and Robert Schenkkan from Greene's novel of 1955, and set in Vietnam three years earlier. The hero, if he can be flattered with such a title, is Fowler (Michael Caine), a British journalist living in, and feeding off, Saigon. He is not a slouch, but neither would he sully his spirit with anything so vulgar as ambition. He loves the East; indeed, he runs through the particulars of that love ("Everything is so intense, the colors, the taste, even the rain") in an opening voice-over that sounds as if it were patched on to the movie at the last moment, and possibly sponsored by Vietnam Airlines. There is no need to lecture us on such intensity, for it is all there in Christopher Doyle's cinematography. Try counting all the point-of-view shots in this movie, and then think of them as world views—the shifting, competing visions of those who are doomed to disagree. The dramatic impetus of the characters may stagger and stall, but Doyle's camera is a snake—savoring the air of the streets, threading its way through the twilit landscape of a night club. It was on a dance floor that Fowler met his mistress, Phuong (Do Hai Yen), who knows that he has a wife back in London, and who, not unlike Vietnam itself, has become the foreigner's addiction without yielding fully to his grasp.

Into this pipe dream—an authentic one, with its puffs of opium—comes Pyle (Brendan Fraser), a clearheaded American who proceeds on the assumption that he knows what both he and

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Vietnam want. Pyle works for the Economic Aid Mission, specializing in ophthalmic medicine. That his specialties may stretch a little wider comes as no surprise, and yet it remains a shock to the system, late in the movie, to see this halting figure, the maladroit hunk with spectacles and two left feet, suddenly accelerate into fluent Vietnamese. He is pure spook, more spearhead than scout, and therefore, with his plans to engineer a blow for freedom in the region, a marked man. Pyle's doubleness extends into the chambers of the heart: when he, too, falls for Phuong, and sets out not so much to steal her as to overthrow, and replace, the Englishman who has dared to colonize her, is the quiet American truly smitten, or is she a useful entrée into Saigon ways? Being a gentleman—he bows and smiles where Fowler stiffens and sighs—Pyle travels all the way to a conflict in the North, in order to ask Fowler, who is on assignment there, for permission to woo his girl. It is such an old-fashioned thing to do; only later do we realize that Pyle may have made the trip for newer and more subversive reasons.

There has been a touch of antsiness in the releasing of this picture. Miramax is said to have fretted over possible charges of anti-Americanism, and with good cause. After all, Greene's novel is defiantly scornful of the United States—of its everyday mores as much as of its foreign policy—and a film that matched even half that sneer could expect to founder in the current climate. But, for one thing, this is a slice of history. We should not rush to compare an America driven by fear of distant instabilities, or by Red rumblings, with an America that responds to atrocity within its own shores. More important, Noyce's version lacks the vehement sourness of the book, be it the acidity of sex or of geopolitics. Those who frequent Greeneland will mourn that loss, and will find the result too suave and milky for their taste, but I cannot bring myself to share their grief. A film that precisely reproduced the Greene tone—an old man's sin-sated weariness, blended with an anguish almost adolescent in its attraction to death—would be close to unwatchable. I am especially glad that Noyce was not required to film Greene at his most gangrenous: "The canal was full of bodies: I am reminded now of an Irish stew containing too much meat." Ugh.

In any case, at the core of this tale is not American lordliness, or the travails of French rule in Indochina, but the universal urge, whether noble or cynical, to impose change upon an unchanging people, or, for that matter, upon a single soul. Also, how could a film be anti-American when America is represented by Brendan Fraser? Pyle may be up to no good, but there is a kind of goodness—a fatal innocence, devoted more to action than to understanding—in the breadth of Fraser's brow. The talk has all been of Michael Caine, and he does indeed embrace his role with gratitude and gusto; but Caine has been here before, marooned in ruefulness, whereas this film is something fresh for Fraser, and another smart move in the most agile of young Hollywood careers. All power to any guy who can swing from "George of the Jungle" to Tennessee Williams on the London stage, from the comical horrors of "The Mummy" to legless bodies in a Saigon square. Fraser makes a perfect Pyle, because he is at once hearty and unreadable. You would trust your life to anyone with shoulders like that, but could you be sure that he would trust you in return? "One never knows another human being," Greene wrote, with a pessimistic thud. We are lucky to have a leading man who can dig around in that grim dictum while never being less than fun to watch.

"The Quiet American" peaks halfway through, in a long day's journey into an explosive night. The two men have run out of gas on the road to Saigon, and their car comes to rest in the middle of nowhere, otherwise known as a somewhere full of Communists. It is an astounding shot: a long-nosed Citroën, a brooding watchtower, and dusk descending as fast as a theatre curtain. I cannot remember a major movie, not even "The Godfather," that forced me to peer so in-

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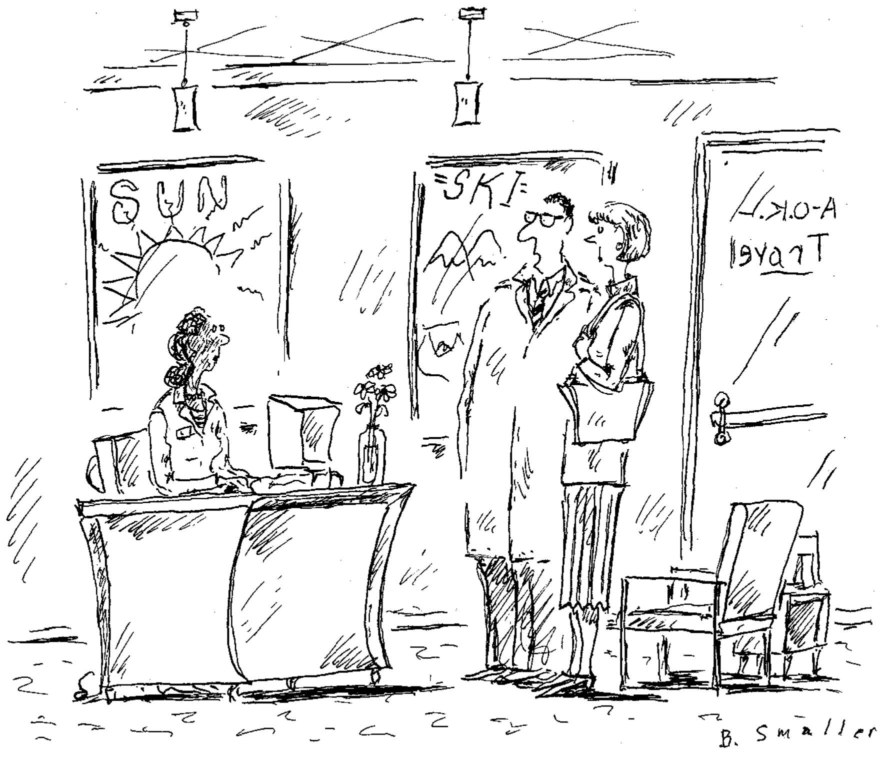

"Can you suggest someplace where the dollar goes far but they don't want to kill us?"

• •

tently into the gloom. The rivals for Phuong take refuge together; in the novel, Greene lets the scene roll on too long, using it as an excuse for Fowler to trade beliefs, or the lack of them, with Pyle. In the movie, their talk is interrupted by mortar fire, and we cut to that quintessential Greene deed: the heroic attempt to save the life of somebody who couldn't care less whether it is saved or left to sink. There are few sequences as tight as this in "The Quiet American," which, as a whole, doesn't quite hang together (Do Hai Yen can do little with the reed-thin role of Phuong), but the movie is never less than honorable, and you can sense the poise and pressure of a director who has finally found something that grips.

Phillip Noyce is an Australian who has worked in America for twenty years, often to ominous effect. In the middle of "The Saint," I remember asking myself whether it would be possible to sneak some holy water into the theatre and perform the last rites. But somehow Noyce rose again, and there were twinges of a combative strain in unlikely places: "Clear and Present Danger" was a left-wing movie that looked and smelled like a right-wing movie, a sleight of hand that may have fooled even Tom Clancy. And now Noyce has returned to more personal projects, making both "Rabbit-Proof Fence," which bites deep into the Australian attitude toward Aboriginal children, and "The Quiet American," which confirms the extent—this may not be common knowledge here—to which Australia now conceives of itself as the southern curve of the Pacific Rim, unhooked from British influence and joined instead to the past and the future of the Far East. "The Quiet American" may end with a montage of headlines, leading us mazily from the era of Fowler and Pyle to the landing of American troops in Vietnam, but the perils and temptations enshrined by the story spread far beyond its period. In October, when more than seventy Australians were killed by a terrorist bomb in Bali, I thought of Greene's novel and of Noyce's film. The political context, these days, could not be more different, but the critical warning that was issued by Greene's imagination—that one man's paradise is another's inferno, and that some men bring hell with them—remains dismayingly true. ♦

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THE BACK PAGE BY PAUL SLANSKY

EMINEM: THE QUIZ

1. Who said, "You know it's gone to hell when the best rapper out there is a white guy and the best golfer is a black guy"?

(a) Charles Barkley.
(b) David Letterman.
(c) Camille Paglia.
(d) Andre Young.

2. True or false: The idea for his alter ego, Slim Shady, came to Eminem (a.k.a. Marshall Mathers III) in a dream.

3. In the song "If I Had," what did Eminem say he would ask for if he "had one wish"?

(a) "The whole upper class to be told, 'Class dismissed.' "

(b) "My crazy mom to get a football-size cyst."

(c) "To get rid of cable and buy me a dish."

(d) "A big enough ass for the whole world to kiss."

4. During an interview promoting "8 Mile," what did Eminem say when asked if he was homophobic?

(a) "Not at all, and I really don't know how that whole shit got started."

(b) "No, but that doesn't mean I want to hang with Richard Simmons."

(c) "No more than the next man who's not gay."

(d) "Hate fags? The answer's 'Guess.' "

5. Who is Deshaun Holton?

(a) The lawyer who defended Eminem after he assaulted a man he caught kissing his wife at the time, Kim.

(b) The member of Eminem's rap group, D12, who goes by the name Proof.

(c) The bully who repeatedly beat up nine-year-old Marshall Mathers III.

(d) The lawyer who represented Eminem's mother, Debbie, in her defamation-of-character lawsuit against him.

ISTVAN BANYAI

6. What name is on the gravestone tattoo that Eminem sports on his stomach, above the words "Rot in Pieces"?

(a) Debbie.
(b) Marshall Mathers II.
(c) Kim.
(d) Mariah.

Match the lyric with the song.

7. "And by the way, when you see my dad / Tell him that I slit his throat in this dream I had."

8. "As long as I'm on pills, and I got plenty of pot / I'll be in a canoe paddlin' makin' fun of your yacht."

9. "But don't blame me when li'l Eric jumps off of the terrace / You shoulda been watchin' him—apparently you ain't parents."

10. "Will Smith don't gotta cuss in his raps to sell records / Well, I do, so fuck him and fuck you, too!"

11. "You gotta call me, man / I'll be the biggest fan you'll ever lose."

12. "I strike a still pose and hit you with some ill flows / That don't even make sense, like dykes usin' dildos."

(a) "Bad Influence."
(b) "Who Knew."
(c) "Stan."
(d) "The Real Slim Shady."
(e) "Any Man."
(f) "My Name Is . . ."

13. What happened when the producer Brian Grazer first met with Eminem to discuss making a movie?

(a) Eminem sat sullenly for fifteen minutes without speaking.

(b) Grazer surprised Eminem by showing up with his usually spiky hair cropped short and dyed blond.

(c) Eminem said, "My daughter, Hailie, thought that 'Nutty Professor' was some funny shit."

(d) Eminem said, "Yo, that Grinch movie—could I do the sequel?"

14. In the song "My Fault," a girl who is freaking out on the mushrooms that Eminem has given her cries, "I'm twenty-six years old and I'm not married, I don't even have any kids and I can't cook." What is his response?

(a) "I can't believe how fuckin' many 'shrooms you took."

(b) "Did you mess with my chess set? I'm missing a rook."

(c) "I'm twenty-six, too, bitch, it says so in this book."

(d) "I'm over here, Sue, you're talkin' to the plant, look!"

15. What would Triumph, the insult-comic dog puppet, have said to Eminem at the 2002 MTV Video Music Awards if Eminem hadn't pushed him aside?

(a) " 'The Eminem Show' was a great CD—for me to poop on!"

(b) "Those Nikes are great—for me to poop on!"

(c) "Let's you and me go poop on Moby."

(d) "You should lighten up. . . . I mean, my mom was a bitch, too, but I don't go writing songs about it."

Answers:
(1) a, (2) False—it came to him while he was on the toilet, (3) d, (4) c, (5) b, (6) c, (7) f, (8) a, (9) b, (10) d, (11) c, (12) e, (13) a, (14) d, (15) d.

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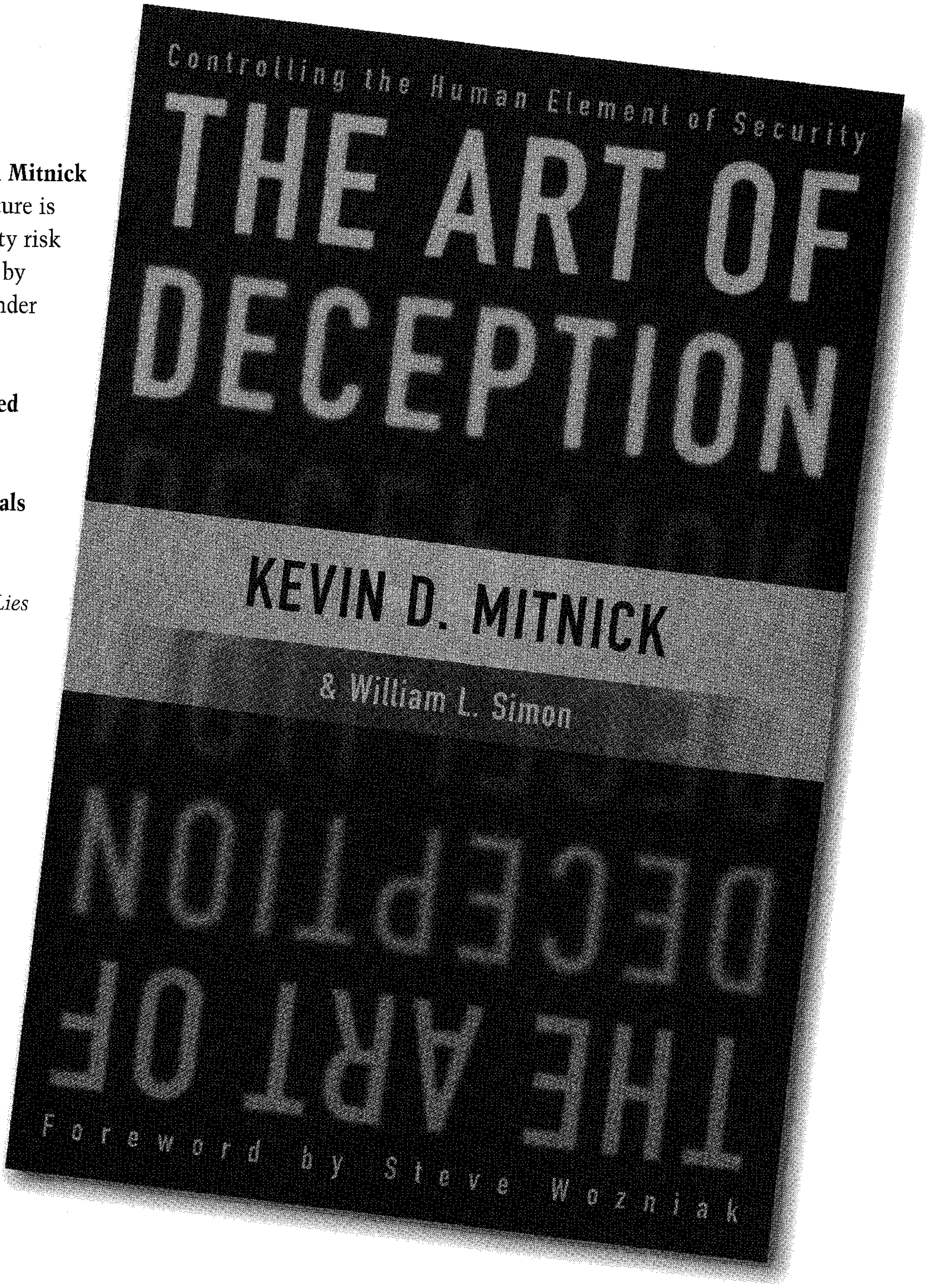
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